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# THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

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THE LAMENT FOR ICARUS.

*From the painting by Herbert James Draper, in the Tate Gallery, London.*

Daedalus, an Athenian inventor, having offended King Minos of Crete, sought safety for himself and his son by a flight over the Ægean Sea. Employing wings which he had contrived, the pair took off. Daedalus made a safe landing, but Icarus flew so close to the sun that the wax by which his wings were fastened melted and he fell into the sea. Here the ocean nymphs are seen lamenting over his dead body.

# THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

EDITED BY

JOHN DRINKWATER

REVISED AND EXTENDED

BY

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AND

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VOLUME ONE

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# FOREWORD

GOOD reading is, of all pursuits, perhaps that from which the individual derives most pleasure and his mind the greatest measure of profit. The child born with an urge to read is thrice fortunate if, in his early years, he makes acquaintance with the plays of Shakespeare. The spell of the immortal Elizabethan will abide with him throughout the years of his life.

But as often as not early opportunities are thrown away. Perhaps there has been scant time or inclination for reading or, perchance, none to offer advice on the choice of books. In either case the unfolding mind is left unaware of the treasures that are part of our heritage. A grievous handicap is imposed upon the individual, though one that can be overcome in later life.

As a boy, one of the greatest writers of English prose living to-day who is at the same time a supreme orator, Mr. Winston Churchill, gave scant indication of the powers that lay within him. Upon his own admission he received but little benefit from the education offered at a famous school. Nevertheless he did contrive to speak and to write English after a style that few, and those few were masters, have bettered.

The man who becomes familiar with the world's most moving poetry and prose can hardly fail to reach a standard of education unattainable by those who never trouble to read. To be acquainted with the myths of Greece and of Rome, with Chaucer and his *Canterbury Tales* and with the works of all the others of that brilliant company who down the ages have so enriched the world of letters is to live upon a plane far removed from that inhabited by those to whom fine poetry and prose make no appeal.

Although English literature is a vast subject in itself

there are also the writers of other lands. France made a noble contribution. Her sons were pioneers of the freedom that all men sought and for which they are still seeking. At a later period, in the New World beyond the western seas young America took up the torch. During the nineteenth century she produced a brilliant company of writers, many of whom were inspired by that Puritan spirit which had led them forth from the country of their origin and in which they continued to find comfort and solace.

In this Outline will be found that which may with truth be described as a perfect guide to the world's grandest literature. As a book it provides a liberal education on the subject and its chapters make appeal to every class of reader. Whatever may be his choice, poetry or the drama, the essay or the works of the outstanding writers of fiction, all are here grouped and classified.

The foundations of all literature, the Bible and the Classics, are worthy of close study. From these sources have sprung many of the most beautiful and expressive phrases in common use. Few English orators have neglected to make liberal use of quotations from the works of the literary giants of other days, and it is precisely this close acquaintance with English literature in all its grandeur that enables the individual to master his mother-tongue, and to become familiar with and unconsciously to absorb many moving figures of speech.

For those who seek to be well-informed, to be accounted well-read, were they to read even one of the books referred to in each of the chapters of the Outline of Literature, they would have proceeded some long way towards a standard of education not always attained in youth.

Or again, and perhaps more interesting, the reader can specialise and gain much diversion in so doing. For example what more fascinating subject of study could there be than that provided by the diaries of Pepys and Evelyn. These two men, contrasting widely in their ways of life, painted for those who came after a glowing canvas depicting life as it was in the England of their time.

The literature of France is a subject of study that will most handsomely repay the student for the hours that he may be able to devote to it. France owed much to men

like Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau. They lived at a time when liberty in France was little but a name. They laboured to foster that spirit of revolt that was soon to lead to better things.

And again what heavy loss does the man inflict upon himself who neglects to read Dumas and to whom *The Three Musketeers* are as men unknown.

But the praises of the immortals in literature could be sung almost without end. They have left behind them a legacy rich beyond compare and one that is there for every man and woman to enjoy. Selection is the only obstacle to a profitable and well-directed course of reading. But it is an obstacle that can be surmounted and to that task the present Outline is dedicated.

H. A. POLLOCK.

If anybody would make me the greatest king that ever lived . . . on condition that I would not read books, I would not be a king. I would rather be a poor man in a garret with plenty of books than a king who did not love reading.

MACAULAY.

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# INTRODUCTION

A GREAT artist once said that for him at the heart of the religious idea was a sense of continuity, that, indeed, this sense amounted to religion. I was standing with him at the time looking over an English landscape, and on the hillside opposite to us was an old track which generations ago had been used by ponies to carry up the daily supply of bread to the little village on the hilltop. The years have changed all that. Modern methods of transport have superseded the ponies, but the track on the hillside can still be seen, a reminder of the unbroken continuity of life through the centuries. And one felt the force of the artist's words. It is just as when, perhaps, you are walking about London and thinking of Shakespeare's London your mind seems to be in some city not only of three hundred years ago but a thousand miles away, and then suddenly you realise that his London was this London and there has been no violent change but only a gradual shifting and growth and redistribution. And again in the thought is the very root of the religious idea. And that is the answer to anyone who may question the use of such a thing as the history of literature, as apart from the direct study of literature itself. This present OUTLINE has two functions. First, it is to give the reader something like a representative summary of the work itself that has been accomplished by the great creative minds of the world in letters. But, also, it aims at placing that work in historical perspective, showing that from the beginning until now, from the nameless poets of the earliest scriptures down to Robert Browning, the spirit of man when most profoundly moved to creative utterance in literature has been and is, through countless manifestations, one and abiding. It aims not only at suggesting to the reader the

particular quality of Homer and Shakespeare and Goethe and Thomas Hardy, but also at showing how these men and their peers, for all their new splendours of voice and gesture, are still the inheritors of an unbroken succession.

The modern reader of the poetry of, say, Mr. Ralph Hodgson, or Mr. W. H. Davies, or Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie, is doing well by himself in the mere reading. But his pleasure is the greater if at the time he dimly remembers how Mr. Hodgson's rapture flooded through the mystical poetry of the seventeenth century, and how the beautiful lyric insolence of Mr. Davies once did duty in Robert Herrick's country parsonage, and how Mr. Abercrombie added the stamp of his own genius to a manner known centuries ago to Lucretius and through a line of philosophical poets down to Walter Savage Landor, to whom it would have been possible for some of the readers of this OUTLINE to have spoken. Or to take another, and by the taste of to-day, a more popular example. The hungry reader of the modern novel loses nothing in his appreciation of the splendid work that is being done by so many writers in that form if upon the background of his mind there move the not too shadowy figures, fading from Dickens and Thackeray through Walter Scott and Jane Austen to Fielding and Samuel Richardson, and beyond them to Thomas Lodge and his fellow-writers of Elizabethan romance, and again beyond them to the mediæval troubadours and trouveres who told their stories by the evening firelight.

The comparison of one age's literature with that of another in point of merit is as little profitable as the comparison of one individual writer with another. The fine attitude towards art, as towards everything else, is to be grateful always for the good and beautiful thing when it comes, without grudging and without doctrinaire complaint that it is not something else. It does not help anybody to say that eighteenth-century English poetry is inferior to that of the seventeenth century, or that Fielding was a better novelist than Meredith. All these things alike are the great glories of a race, the one as honourably to be kept in memory as another. But it does help appreciation to know what was the relation of eighteenth- to seventeenth-

century poetry, and what was the line of descent by which Meredith came from Fielding. Such knowledge makes us remember always that however great the hero of our worship, he is but one figure in an organic whole which is yet greater than he. We may, for example, put Shakespeare with justice above all our own writers, but we remember that the very secret of his honour is that he stands so proudly at the head of a story so wonderful.

To know intimately the whole literature even of one language is beyond the industry of a lifetime. But here in this OUTLINE are working a number of men whose devotion has been to many branches of the art in many tongues. Together they hope to present, in a simple form that has authority, brief annals of the most living record of the soul of man. It is an enterprise which must have the blessing of many for whom the way of life has made reading necessarily haphazard and fragmentary, but who are none the less alert to the beauty of every true book.

JOHN DRINKWATER

A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life.—MILTON.

# THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

## I

## THE FIRST BOOKS IN THE WORLD

### § 1

THE history of literature really begins long before men learned to write. Dancing was the earliest of the arts. Man danced for joy round his primitive camp-fire after the defeat and slaughter of his enemy. He yelled and shouted as he danced, and gradually the yells and shouts became coherent and caught the measure of the dance, and thus the first war-song was sung. As the idea of God developed, prayers were framed. The songs and the prayers became traditional and were repeated from one generation to another, each generation adding something of its own.

As man slowly grew more civilised, he was compelled to invent some method of writing by three urgent necessities. There were certain things that it was dangerous to forget, and which therefore had to be recorded. It was often necessary to communicate with persons who were some distance away, and it was necessary to protect one's property by marking tools, cattle, and so on, in some distinctive manner. So man taught himself to write, and having learned to write purely for utilitarian reasons, he used this new method for preserving his war-songs and his prayers. Of course, among these ancient peoples, there were only a very few individuals who learned to write, and only a few who could read what was written.

The earliest writing was merely rude scratchings on rocks, and it is supposed that these rock inscriptions were traced by a scribe, and then actually cut by a stonecutter, who

probably had no idea of the meaning. Presently, man began to write with a stylus on baked clay tablets. Specimens of these clay books were discovered by Sir Henry Layard in Chaldea. One of them is now in the British Museum, and is an account of the Flood. This is probably the oldest existing example of writing. It was inscribed about the year 4000 B.C., and there is reason to believe that the Hebrews founded the story of the Flood in the Book of Genesis on the Chaldean narrative written thousands of years before the Bible. The Chaldeans used what are called cuneiform characters. The word "cuneiform" is derived from the Latin *cuneus*, which means a wedge. Each character is composed of a wedge or a combination of wedges written from left to right with a square-pointed stylus.

The Chaldean scribes were in the pay of the Court. When the king went to war, the scribe was an important member of his staff. It was his business to note the number of cities captured, the number of enemies killed, and the amount of the spoils, and, incidentally, to accent the prowess of the king. The priests who wrote the Chaldean religious literature also received salaries from the royal treasury. In addition to war records and prayers, Chaldean clay tablets have been found dealing with agriculture, astrology, and politics. It has been suggested that the clay tablets discovered by Layard and other Assyriologists were part of the library of Sennacherib at Nineveh. Sennacherib died in the year 681 B.C.

Egyptian literature is next to the Chaldean in antiquity. The Egyptian books were written on papyrus, a material made from the pith of a reed that grew in the valley of the Nile, with a reed pen made from the stalk of grasses, or from canes and bamboos. The earliest Egyptian book of which we know, *The Book of the Dead*, was written at the time of the building of the Great Pyramid. A copy of *The Book of the Dead* is in the British Museum. Mr. George Putnam describes it as "consisting of invocations to the deities, psalms, prayers, and the descriptions of experiences that awaited the spirit of the departed in the world to come, experiences that included an exhaustive analysis of his past life and his final judgment for his life hereafter."

*The Book of the Dead* is a sort of ritual, and a copy of the book was always placed in the tomb as a safe conduct for the soul on its journey to the world to come. On account of this custom the ancient Egyptian undertakers are, as Mr. Putnam says, the first booksellers known to history. In Egypt the literary idea flourished in the temples, and among the many Egyptian gods was Thoth-Hermes, the Ibis-headed " Lord of the Hall of Books." But while much

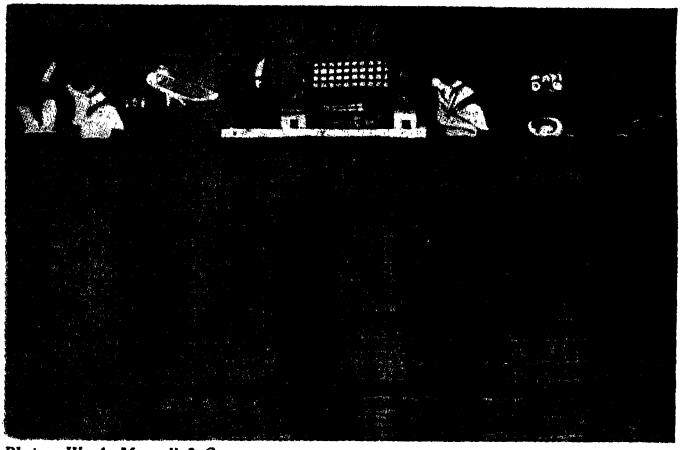


*Photo : W. A. Mansell & Co.*

FACSIMILE OF THE PAPYRUS INSCRIBED WITH HIEROGLYPHIC TEXT OF *THE BOOK OF THE DEAD.*

Part of the oldest book in the world. A copy of the book was always placed in the tomb as a safe conduct for the soul on its journey to the world to come.

of the little of ancient Egyptian literature that has come down to us is definitely religious, there was also a Court literature in ancient Egypt and a popular literature made up of folk-tales. In the centuries that followed, the Egyptians produced an extensive literature comprising books on religion, morals, law, rhetoric, arithmetic, mensuration, geometry, medicine, books of travel, and, above all, novels. Only a very little of this literature has been preserved, and it is probable that ancient Egyptian literature was not represented even on the shelves at Alexandria, which was entirely a Greek library.

Apart from *The Book of the Dead*, another Egyptian book, *The Precepts of Ptah-Hotep*, is the oldest book in the world. Ptah-Hotep was born in Memphis and he lived about the year 3550 B.C.

The immense age of this oldest book but one may be realised if it be remembered that it was written two thousand years before Moses and two thousand years before the



*Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.*

PAPYRUS INSCRIBED IN THE HIERATIC CHARACTER WITH AN EGYPTIAN ROMANCE AND BEARING THE NAMES OF ANTEF, ELEVENTH DYNASTY, ABOUT 2600 B.C., AND THOTHMES III, EIGHTEENTH DYNASTY, ABOUT 1600 B.C.

compilation of the Indian Vedas. It is two thousand five hundred years older than Homer and Solomon's Proverbs. The space of years between Solomon and ourselves is not so great as that between Solomon and Ptah-Hotep.

The precepts were written on a papyrus 23 feet 7 inches by 5 feet $\frac{7}{8}$ inch, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris. The following is an extract from Mr. Gunn's translation :

Cause not fear among men ; for (this) the God punisheth likewise. For there is a man that saith, " Therein is life " ; and he is bereft of the bread of his mouth. There is a man that saith, " Power (is therein) " ;

and he saith, " I seize for myself that which I perceive." Thus a man speaketh, and he is smitten down. It is another that attaineth by giving unto him that hath not. Never hath that which men have prepared for come to pass; for what the God hath commanded, even that thing cometh to pass. Live, therefore, in the house of kindliness, and men shall come and give gifts of themselves.

If thou be among the guests of a man that is greater than thou, accept that which he giveth thee, putting it to thy lips. If thou look at him that is before thee (thine host), pierce him not with many glances. It is abhorred of the soul to stare at him. Speak not till he address thee; one knoweth not what may be evil in his opinion. Speak when he questioneth thee; so shall thy speech be good in his opinion. The noble who sitteth before food divideth it as his soul moveth him; he giveth unto him that he would favour—it is the custom of the evening meal. It is his soul that guideth his hand. It is the noble that bestoweth, not the underling that attaineth. Thus the eating of bread is under the providence of God; he is an ignorant man that disputeth it.

If thou be an emissary sent from one noble to another, be exact after the manner of him that sent thee, give his message even as he hath said it. Beware of making enmity by thy words, setting one noble against the other by perverting truth. Overstep it not, neither repeat that which any man, be he prince or peasant, saith in opening the heart; it is abhorrent to the soul.

§ 2

Hundreds of years before the beginning of European literature, books had been written in China. But Confucius, the great Chinese philosopher, who flourished five hundred years before the birth of Christ, laid the foundation of Chinese literature and ethics. They were written on tablets made from bamboo fibre. Sometimes Chinese tablets were scratched with a sharp stylus, sometimes the words were painted with Indian ink. The Chinese also wrote books on silk. Paper was manufactured in China about 100 B.C. The Chinese began to print from solid blocks soon after the birth of Christ, and they were printing from movable type three hundred years before the invention of printing in Europe.

Early Chinese literature was ethical—the collection of traditional wisdom concerning conduct, written in order that men might live happily in this world and be prepared for a better and more satisfactory life in the world to come. The ancient Chinese writer was generally an honoured citizen, and was regarded as an important national asset, but at the beginning of the second century B.C. the

Emperor Che-Hwang-ti ordered that all books should be burned except those dealing with medicine and husbandry. This Mr. Putnam says is probably "the most drastic and comprehensive policy for the suppression of a literature that the world has ever seen." Fortunately many of the ancient songs had been learned by heart and were repeated by public reciters. After the vandal emperor's death the text was again committed to writing. Though the Chinese author could not look for any income from the circulation of his books, he could rely on receiving a stipend from the State, and in no country has the government held writers and students in higher honour. In this connection it is interesting to note that one of the earliest successful women writers in the history of literature was a Chinese woman named Pan Chao, who was writing history at the beginning of the Christian era. The ancient literature of China is so extensive and so distinguished, that modern Chinese literature is little more than a series of commentaries on the works of classic authors. The influence of the classic writers on the national life has been tremendous, and it has made China in all respects the most conservative nation in the world. The Chinese respect for tradition is so great that the production of a modern literature that might rival the ancient literature is regarded as an impious impertinence, entirely unnecessary, entirely undesirable. Moreover, the devotion to the classic writers has prevented any change in the Chinese language since the dawn of history. To read a poem by Chaucer written five hundred years ago, and to note the immense difference between the English of Chaucer and the English of to-day, makes it easy to realise the extraordinary unchangeableness of the Chinese language.

The Indian *Vedas*, the sacred scriptures of the Sanscrit peoples, were written out at least a thousand years before Christ. Buddha lived towards the end of the sixth century B.C., and his teaching caused the production of an immense Indian theological literature, written either on dressed skins or prepared palm-leaves. The earliest Hebrew books were written about 600 B.C. So far as is known there was no literature in Japan until about a thousand years ago, and in Japan, as in China and in Greece, the public reciters preceded the written book by many centuries.

The Phœnicians, the busy trading Semitic people who lived in the North of Africa, and whose capital, Carthage, was the first commercial capital of the world, first taught the Greeks how to write, and from the Egyptians the Greeks obtained their first idea of bookmaking. The Greek alphabet was evolved, certainly as early as the eighth century B.C. In his Greek literature Jevons says that reading and writing were taught in Greece as early as 500 B.C., in which year there were boys' schools in the island of Chios, and it was generally regarded as shameful not to be able to write and read. Jevons, however, suggests that education in Greece at this time was usually only enough to make a man capable of keeping accounts and of writing to his friends, and that there is no reason to suppose that the Greeks in this early age had acquired the habit of reading books. The Greek public reciters, who flourished before writing became common, were called "rhapsodists," and their custom was to entertain audiences in the open air with a complete recital of the Homeric epics. The rhapsodists travelled from town to town like a modern theatrical company on tour, and the poems and legends that they learned by heart were the stock-in-trade that secured them a living.

Alexandria succeeded Athens as the capital of Greek culture, and the Ptolemies, who were enthusiastic book collectors, endeavoured to collect every available copy of the great Greek masterpieces. There were 700,000 Greek books in the library at Alexandria, which was partly burnt by Julius Cæsar in the year 48 B.C. To-day, nearly two thousand years later, there are only four million books in the British Museum Library. On the shelves at Alexandria, the reader found the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Plato's *Republic*, the writings of Xenophon and Herodotus, the plays of Euripides, Sophocles, Æschylus, and Aristophanes, Euclid's Geometry, and many books on mathematics and science which have been entirely lost. It is a remarkable fact that, though the ancients, and particularly the Romans, were expert road-makers, working according to scientific plans, there is in existence no treatise on the ancient art of road-making nor on any other branch of ancient engineering. Such books must have been in existence, but they have completely disappeared.

The books in the library at Alexandria were very different things from the books in the British Museum. Most of them were written on papyrus, a material made from the pith of an Egyptian reed, and a few were written on parchment, the use of which had been discovered about a hundred years before the Alexandria library was set on fire. The papyrus book looked very much like a modern map. The matter was written on one side only, and the papyrus was fastened to a wooden roller, round which it was rolled. Some of these rolls were very long, but the usual habit was to make them comparatively short. The papyrus was generally about a foot in width. The book was written in a series of narrow columns running the full length of the roll, and the columns were from two to three and a half inches, with lines in red ruled between them. Homer's *Iliad* would probably have been written on at least twenty-four different rolls, and there were many copies of the same work in the Alexandria library, so that the actual number of individual books was very much less than the number of rolls. After the book had been written on the papyrus by the scribe, it was ornamented and embellished by a craftsman, who was the prototype of the modern book illustrator. Then the binders received the manuscript, and their business was to cut the margins and smooth the parchment or papyrus. The scroll was then fixed to a wooden roller, and the knobs at the end of the rollers were often decorated with metal ornaments. The manuscripts were written with reed pens in ink made of lamp-black and gum. The back of the book was dyed with saffron, and the rolls were usually wrapped in parchment cases, dyed purple or yellow.

The scribes were, also, the earliest booksellers. They would borrow a manuscript, possibly for a fee, laboriously copy it on their papyrus scrolls and sell the copies. There were many of these scribe-booksellers dwelling in Athens fifty years before the birth of Christ. They had their shops in the market-places, and by the time of Alexander the Great the bookselling trade had become an established institution. The ancient bookseller was not always particularly honest, and it was a common practice to give a modern manuscript the appearance of a rare antique by

burying it in a sack of grain until the colour had changed and the papyrus had become worm-eaten.

§ 3

It was in the third century before Christ that Alexandria became the centre of Greek literary activity, and about the same time Roman writers began to create original work in the manner of the Athenians. Perhaps the most famous literary achievement at the beginning of Alexandria's literary history was the translation of the Old Testament into Greek in the version that is known as the Septuagint. According to tradition the translation was made by seventy learned Jewish Rabbis. The fact that the papyrus was manufactured in Egypt helped to give Alexandria its importance as a book-producing centre, and its geographical position kept it, to a large extent, outside the constant wars that devastated so large a part of the ancient world. Staffs of expert copyists worked in the great Alexandrian library under the supervision of authoritative scholars, and the copies they made were distributed throughout the world by the Alexandria booksellers. The prominent literary position of Alexandria continued long after its conquest by the Romans and until Greek ceased to be the fashionable language of the ancient world. Even as late as the fifth century A.D. Alexandria was a centre of culture and learning, a fact which Charles Kingsley has employed with dramatic effect in his novel *Hypatia.*

In its beginning the literature of Rome was a foreign literature. As Rome established itself as the capital of the world, ambitious writers flocked to it from all parts of the world, just as in the eighteenth century they flocked to Paris, but for a very long time Greek remained the literary language. Long after the Roman armies had occupied the whole of the Grecian Peninsula, the cultured Roman read Greek books, bought from Alexandrian copyists. The only parallel to the recognition of Greek as the sole worthy literary language occurred in the eighteenth century when French held much the same position on the continent of Europe, and when Frederick the Great of Prussia amused

himself by writing French verse. When a Latin literature began to be produced it was entirely based on Greek models. The Greek plays were translated into Latin, Homer was translated into Latin, and the original Latin work was inevitably imitative. In this connection it is interesting to note that many of the more conspicuous Latin authors, who flourished before the first century B.C., that is to say before the beginning of the Golden Age of Latin literature, were foreigners and not Romans by birth. The classic period of Latin literature barely lasted a hundred years. Between the year 100 B.C. and the birth of Christ, Cicero, Lucretius, Cæsar, Horace, Virgil, Ovid, and Livy all lived and wrote and died.

In his interesting *The Fascination of Books*, Mr. Joseph Shaylor says :

> The Roman libraries and bookshops were the resort of the fashionable as well as of the learned society of this period. At these shops, literary and critical friends met and discussed each new book as it appeared from the copyist. These shops were located in the most frequented places. The titles of new and standard books were exhibited outside the shops as an advertisement. Announcements of works in preparation were made in the same way. The outside box from which cheap books might be collected was also a feature in trade. Many of these old-time customs have their counterpart in the publishing and bookselling of to-day. We read of Cicero desiring to pay for a copy of one of his books which he wished sent to a friend, so that it should not be entered on the register of complimentary copies, and also giving instructions as to the "remainder" of a particular book consisting of a considerable number of copies of which he wished to dispose at a cheap rate.
>
> We are told that the most frequent fate of unsuccessful poetry was to be used for the wrapping up of fish and other goods, while large supplies of surplus stock found their way from the booksellers to the fires of public baths, a very right way of disposing of them, and a method which modern publishers might often adopt with advantage. Other ancient customs have still their modern significance, such as buying all rights in an MS. A royalty system also existed, and authors were frequently paid in part for their labours by receiving copies of their published book, although by many it was considered degrading to ask for payment for literary work, a form of pride which is not common to-day. As no copyright law was then in existence, books were copied and re-copied immediately upon publication.

Professional writers in ancient Rome depended for their livelihood on the patronage of the wealthy lover of letters, and it is worth noting that what was true in Rome before

the birth of Christ remained true of the whole of Europe until the end of the eighteenth century. Horace and Virgil depended on the bounty of Mæcenas, an enlightened millionaire who regarded the poet as the most useful of all the servants of the State. Centuries afterwards Molière and La Fontaine depended on the bounty of Louis XIV, and English men of letters in the eighteenth century had either to find a patron or to starve.

§ 4

In the third century A.D. books began to change their form. Instead of being continuous rolls, the pages were folded and stitched and bound together in wooden boards, which were generally ornamented. During the Dark Ages, when few new books were written, it was in the monasteries that books found their only safe lodgment and willing hands to copy them. In most monasteries there was a room called the scriptorium where the work of transcribing was carried on. Occasionally some comparatively enlightened layman appreciated the work of these literary monks. The great Charlemagne, for example, granted the rights of hunting to certain monasteries in order that the monks might provide themselves with material for the covers of their books from the skin of the deer. Although in these ten centuries there was little original authorship, there was splendid artistic expression in the ornamentation of manuscripts. The monkish illuminated borders and letters remain things of beauty and delight.

Probably the oldest illuminated manuscript is the Virgil, with its fifty miniatures on its seventy-six pages of vellum, in the Vatican. Ornamentation and illustration were practised in the first centuries after Christ in Alexandria, and it is probable that Byzantine illumination began there. There were many kinds of illumination in the Middle Ages. The art was patronised by Alfred the Great, and was practised at Winchester and elsewhere in England. Happily, many examples of these beautiful monkish MSS., with their delicately ornamented borders and fine initial letters, have been preserved. The monastery scribes wrote with quill

pens. In his interesting book, *Illumination*, Mr. Sidney Farnsworth says that probably the earliest allusion to the quill pen "occurs in the writings of St. Isidore of Seville, who lived in the early part of the seventh century." Quills were, however, in use at a much earlier time, and bronze pens were used by the Romans.

The artistic activities of the monasteries were not by any means universally applauded. One mediæval Puritan, referring to these beautiful manuscripts, said :

> Some possess the sacred books and have them as if they had them not. They shut them up in their book chests. They pay attention only to the thinness of the skin and the elegance of the letter. They use them less for reading than for show.

The mediæval monks who transcribed manuscripts were generally exonerated from manual labour in the fields.

The volumes in the monastic libraries consisted of pages as accurately and beautifully written as if they were printed. In the Hunterian Museum at Glasgow there is one volume that was always accounted among the printed books, until a curious observer discovered on a certain page that there was a hole in the parchment, and that this hole had been skipped. This, of course, was a proof that the work had been written by a scribe and not printed by a printing press. Writing of monkish manuscripts, Andrew Lang said :

> It is one of the charms of the MSS. that they illustrate in their minute way all the art and even the social condition of the period in which they were produced. Apostles, saints, and prophets wear the contemporary costume, and Jonah, when thrown to the hungry whale, wears doublet and trunk hose. The ornaments illustrate the architectural taste of the day. The backgrounds change from diapered patterns to landscapes as newer ways of looking at nature penetrated the monasteries.

In Charles Reade's novel *The Cloister and the Hearth* there is a vivid description of the artist-monks of the Middle Ages. One of them says :

> A scroll looks but barren unless a border of fruit and leaves and rich arabesques surround the good words and charm the senses as those do the soul and understanding, to say nothing of the pictures of holy men and women departed, with which the several chapters would be adorned, and not alone the eye soothed with the brave and sweetly blended colours, but the heart lifted by effigies of the saints in glory.

The literary work of the monasteries only came to an end when printing was invented by Gutenberg.

§ 5

So far, we have been considering the production and the embellishment of books, but before we proceed to the detailed examination of the great achievements of literature it is necessary to discover the reasons that impelled men from the earliest ages to write books. As we have already seen, so long ago as the birth of Christ the world possessed an elaborate literature which contained supreme examples of every literary form, and we have seen how this literature developed after the invention of writing. Let us endeavour to realise the mentality of prehistoric man living a hard life in a sparsely inhabited and bewildering world. He was continually confronted by phenomena which he could not understand, and by problems to which his ever-increasing intelligence demanded an answer. Andrew Lang has summarised these problems :

> What was the origin of the world and of men and of beasts ? How came the stars by their arrangement and movements ? How are the motions of sun and moon to be accounted for ? Why has this tree a red flower and this bird a black mark on its tail ? What was the origin of the tribal dances or of this or that law of custom or etiquette ?

In finding their answers to these question, prehistoric men were influenced by the fact that they did not possess our sense of superiority to the rest of creation. They believed that all animals had souls, and that there was personality even in the inanimate. Thus Herodotus tells us that the Egyptians regarded fire as a live beast, and the wind has been universally regarded as a person and the father of children. As Andrew Lang says : " To the savage, sky, sun, sea, wind are not only persons, but they are savage persons." With these beliefs in his mind, the prehistoric man set out to find answers to the problems of the universe, and these answers naturally took the form of a story or, what is called, a myth. Mythology has provided us with the early mental and spiritual history of our race. When literature came to be created and man started to write, he naturally first

wrote down those well-known stories, which had been repeated from generation to generation, each new generation adding something of its own, of the mysteries of life and death and of man's general relation to the world in which he lived. These myths, which form the basis of literature, cover a vast field of speculation. They include myths concerning the origin of the world and the origin of man; myths concerning the arts of life, that is to say, stories telling how man learned the use of the bow and the plough, how he learned the art of pottery, and so on; myths concerning the sun and the moon and the stars; myths concerning death; and finally and perhaps most interesting, romantic myths, stories concerned with sex love and the relation between men and women. In all these myths the one common quality is the personality given to animals and to inanimate objects, and this general conception led to the idea that the world was peopled by a vast army of gods acutely and often hostilely interested in human affairs — gods to be worshipped, gods to be placated. Between the myth and the development of the religious idea there is a very intimate connection. The beginning of literature was largely concerned with the records of the deeds of the gods, and, as we have seen, as the religious idea developed and man built temples and constructed a ritual of worship, the temple became in many parts of the world the first home of the book.

There is no more interesting and important fact in human history than the universality of folk-songs and legends. There is an amazing similarity between the subjects of the songs of the East and the songs of the West, and stories are common to all the peoples of the world. Many theories have been devised to explain the wide distribution of myths. It has been suggested that the resemblance is purely accidental, but this is ridiculous. It has been suggested that the stories, common to Indians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Germans, Scandinavians, Russians, and Celts, were known to the ancestors of them all, the Aryan tribes, who lived on the central Asian tablelands before they emigrated westward, in several great waves, to found the European nations. This seems a plausible enough explanation, but it ignores the fact that



*Photo: Fredk. Hollyer, London.*

"PAN AND PSYCHE," BY SIR EDWARD BURNE-JONES.

Psyche asked Pan for succour and advice after Cupid had left her, as related on page 30

the stories known to all the Aryan peoples are also, in some instances, known to non-Aryan peoples like the Chinese and the American Indians. Probably the most satisfactory explanation of the universality of myths is that they are the result of universal experience and sentiment. As Andrew Lang has said: "They are the rough produce of the early human mind and are not yet characterised by

the differentiations of race and culture. Such myths might spring up anywhere among untutored men and anywhere might survive into civilised literature."

Whatever the explanation may be, the wide distribution of these old-world stories is a most suggestive and interesting fact. It may be worth while giving two examples. The story of Cupid and Psyche is one of the best known incidents in Greek mythology. Psyche, the youngest daughter of a king, was so beautiful that she excited the jealousy of Venus herself, and the goddess bade her son Cupid slay her mortal rival. Cupid stole into Psyche's apartment, but, when he caught sight of her loveliness, he started back in surprise and one of his own arrows entered into his flesh. He vowed that he would never hurt such beauty and innocence. Shortly afterwards, he became Psyche's lover, visiting her at night, making her promise that she would never attempt to discover his name or to catch a glimpse of his face, and warning her that if she broke her promise he would be compelled to leave her for ever. For a long time she restrained her curiosity, and then one night she lighted her lamp, and gazed in admiration at her sleeping lover. Accidentally she let a drop of oil from the lamp fall on to Cupid's shoulder, and he immediately sprang from the couch and flew through the open window, and Psyche had to suffer many things before her lover was restored to her.

This same story of a bride who disobeys the orders of her husband occurs in the Norse legend of Freja and Oddur, and is told in the Indian Vedas of Pururavas and Urvasi. There is also a Welsh and a Zulu form of the same story. The even more familiar Greek story of Diana and Endymion has its versions in other languages. Diana, the goddess of the moon, was driving her milk-white steeds across the heavens, when she caught sight of Endymion, a handsome young shepherd, asleep on the hillside. She bent down and kissed him, and night after night she left her car at the same place for a hasty blissful moment. As Byron has written :

> Chaste Artemis, who guides the lunar car,
> The pale nocturnal vigils ever keeping,
> Sped through the silent space from star to star,
> And, blushing, stooped to kiss Endymion sleeping.

After a while, Diana could not bear the thought of Endymion's beauty being lost or marred, so she caused him to fall into an eternal sleep and hid him in a cave never profaned by human presence. This story belongs to the Solar Myths, and it is generally supposed that Endymion was the setting sun, at which the moon gazes as she starts on her nightly journey. The same story is known to the Australian aboriginals, perhaps the most backward race in the world, to the Cingalese, and to certain African tribes, always, of course, with local variations.

These myths were the artistic possession of humanity long before the beginning of literature, and they have inspired poets throughout the ages, not only Homer and Ovid, but modern writers like Browning, Hawthorne, Herrick, Longfellow, Meredith, William Morris, Pope, Swinburne, Tennyson, and particularly Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Rossetti. It was to the stories of mythology that the great painters of the Renaissance turned for subjects when Greek learning and Greek culture were restored to Western Europe, and, centuries afterwards, the same stories inspired the noble group of pre-Raphaelite painters, which was one of the outstanding glories of Victorian England.

It is of the first importance to note that literature had a co-operative and not an individual beginning. The early stories of the stars, as well as the first songs crooned by mothers to their babies, were handed along from age to age, changed, elaborated, improved, until at last they were scratched on the bark of a tree or elaborately written out on the papyrus. At the same time as men were inventing and elaborating myths they were also accumulating records. As families grew into tribes, and as tribes contended for the best pastures and the best fishing, there were countless opportunities for individual prowess and courageous achievement, and the mighty deeds of the heroes of one generation became in succeeding generations the cherished possessions of their family and their tribe. The stories were repeated with pride, and, as time went on, the actual deeds of the fighting man were picturesquely exaggerated until he came to be regarded either as himself a god or as the chosen protégé of a legion of gods. These individual achievements were intimately associated with the history of the

tribes to which the heroes belonged, and, thus, when men first began to write, there was a vast amount of biographical and historical tradition already in existence in the world, known by heart by scores and hundreds of different persons and ready for the scribe permanently to preserve.

But even myths, vast as was the ground they covered, and heroic legends did not exhaust the material ready to the hand of the first man who learned to write. The associated life necessarily leads to accepted custom and convention. It is impossible for a number of individuals to live together in a family or in a tribe without observing certain rules. These rules become more stringent and, at the same time, more interesting when they are associated with certain recurring events. The outstanding events in every human life are birth, death, and marriage, and with each of these certain traditional ceremonies were soon generally observed. The changing seasons also brought with them ceremonies, originally intended for the placation of the gods, and springtime and harvest, the sowing of the seed and the reaping of the crops, became red-letter days in the primitive man's year. These customs and ceremonies also supplied a fertile field for the first scribes. In addition there was ready for them a vast oral collection of nursery stories, closely allied of course with the more terrifying myths, of proverbs and of droll sayings, mostly comments on the familiar incidents of life.

## § 6

Poetry is far older than writing. It has now been established that the folk-songs of the European peoples, still repeated and sung by peasants in out-of-the-way villages, are an "immemorial inheritance." Andrew Lang says:

> Their present form, of course, is relatively recent: in centuries of oral recitation the language altered automatically, but the stock situations and ideas of many romantic ballads are of dateless age and worldwide diffusion.

The very name "ballad" suggests the method by which men first began to arrive at the rhythmical arrangement of words. "Ballad" is derived from the old French verb

*baller*, which meant to dance, and the ballad was originally a song sung by a dancer, the words necessarily accompanying the movement. The custom of improvising words to fit a dance still exists in Russia and in the Pyrenees. Puttenham, an English writer of the sixteenth century, says in his *Art of English Poesie* :

> Poesie is more ancient than the artificiall of the Greeks and Latines, and used of the ancient and uncivill who were before all science and civilitie.

These early songs and dances were the first artistic expression of emotion. With them primitive men found (again to quote Andrew Lang) " the appropriate relief of their emotion in moments of high-wrought feeling or on solemn occasions." In addition, therefore, to the stories and legends and myths, the biographies of traditional heroes and the records of families and tribes, the first professional literary man had a store of popular songs to write down on his papyrus, and it is clear that these songs were the beginning of all poetry, poetry having been defined by Mr. Watts-Dunton as " the concrete and artistic expression of the human mind in emotional and rhythmical language." It is important to note that in poetry as well as in prose the initial impulse was absolutely popular. The common dreams and aspirations were the subject of the unknown poets, who gave them a new and greater beauty. This early popular art was followed by the development of a definite poetry of personality, the expression of particular rather than general emotion which was an aristocratic and not a democratic possession. The extent to which the folk-song belonged to the people has been proved by the continuance of its popularity into the centuries of progress and civilisation. In the Golden Age of Greece and Rome, few men could read and fewer still could write. But most men could sing, and many men could improvise songs. In the dark centuries that followed the fall of the Roman Empire, books had few readers, but songs were still sung. The new learning that came with the Renaissance hardly affected the common people, and the power to read and write has only become general during the last hundred years. But through all the ages the unlettered have

possessed a spoken literature of their own—stories and songs, the same in substance as the stories repeated and the songs sung by primitive tribesmen long before the beginning of historical records.

There is no more interesting and important fact in human history than the similarity of folk-songs and legends. The same stories are common to all the peoples of the world, and there is an amazing similarity between the subjects of the songs of the East and the songs of the West. A great and entertaining literature has been written round this subject in recent times. In these pages it has been sufficient to suggest the origins of romantic literature and to point out the vast store of material that was waiting for the first literary artist. Early literature was therefore the collection of traditional artistic possessions, the first writers selecting, arranging, and beautifying stories and songs that had been familiar to their ancestors for many generations. This fact should be borne in mind by the reader as he begins to consider the monuments of ancient literature, the epics of Homer and the earlier books of the Bible.

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# II

# HOMER

## § 1

HOMER is the greatest of all the epic poets, and he has left us the earliest pictures of European civilisation. Both as poetry and as history the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* hold a place apart in world-literature, and it is appalling to think of what would have been the consequences if they had not been preserved. They constituted the Bible of the Greeks in historic times; thus the philosophers, Plato among them, are constantly quoting lines from them to illustrate a point of morals or to clinch a spiritual argument just as Christians have been in the habit of using scriptural texts. To the Greeks Homer was *the* poet, just as to us the Bible is *the* book; and they, like us, have often found a deeper significance or a more poignant consolation than was originally intended in plain words which have gathered, in the long succession of time, a charm of association and the added beauty that is memorial. Moreover, these truly great poems, temples open to sunshine and sea-breezes, and built of noble numbers, have been models for the epic in every western age that knew them, or the works that perpetuated their pattern (*e.g.* Virgil's *Æneid*). It is probable that we should never have had the "artificial epics," as they have been called, of Virgil, Lucan, Dante, Milton, and the rest, if the Homeric poems had been lost. It is even possible that such a loss would have prevented the "grand style" of poetry from being consciously cultivated. But what perhaps illustrates the enormous influence exerted by those happily preserved masterpieces of man's imagination is this strange fact—that even in the workaday world of to-day plain people know the meaning of the adjective "Homeric," though they may not have read a single line of any translation of Homer.

We all know what is meant when a speaker or a writer alludes to "Homeric grandeur" or "Homeric laughter," or observes that "even Homer sometimes nods." Furthermore, the chief Homeric characters are known to us all for their predominant qualities: Achilles for his valour, Helen for her beauty, Ulysses for his resourcefulness, Penelope for her faithfulness. Any orator, even if his pedestal be only a soap-box at a street-corner, can use one of these names to point a moral; they are as familiar on our lips as the names of Hamlet or Pecksniff, Othello or Micawber.

I have spoken, and shall go on speaking, of Homer as a poet, human and indivisible; this is done "without prejudice," as the lawyers say—that is, without expressing any present opinion as to the way in which the Homeric poems came into being. He or she who wishes to visit the "wide expanse"

> That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne,

and to "breathe its pure serene" (the inspired Keats gets the absolutely just word here!), need know nothing whatever about that controversial labyrinth, the Homeric Problem. Indeed, a childlike ignorance of the whole vast discussion started by Wolf's *Prolegomena* (published in 1795) is a real advantage, for it puts the new votary in the position, as it were, of a listener to the recital of the poems in the springtide of historic Hellas when nobody had even begun to doubt whether the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had been created by the same master-poet, the selfsame blind old singer of a later but still beautiful legend, which shows us many cities contending for the honour of being his birthplace. For these poems can be read in verse translations —with joy to the reader—for the story, and to become acquainted with the noble men and women, the not more noble gods and goddesses, who love and hate and fight and speak and live and die in their stirring vicissitudes.

There are no better stories to be found in books; no personages better worth knowing. In Achilles we have a hero indeed; lacking the Christian gentleness that is an aureole about Lancelot's bowed head, it is true, but though barbaric in the violence of his anger and his unrestrained sorrow, yet a glorious fighter, a gentleman unafraid of the

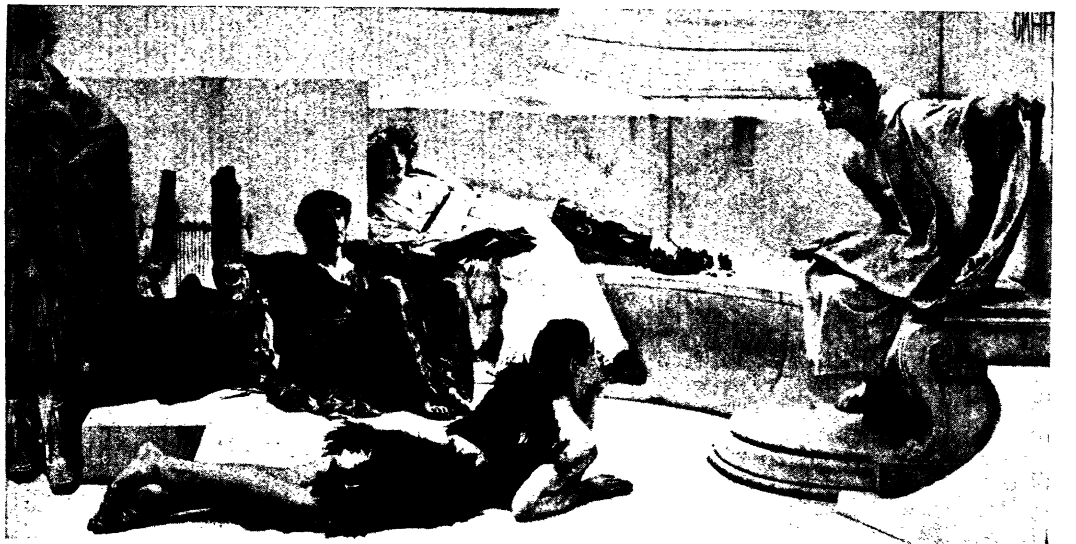


*Photo : Rischgitz Collection.*

"A READING FROM HOMER," BY SIR LAWRENCE ALMA-TADEMA

Greek civilisation was based on the Homeric legends, which every Greek knew by heart, and which supplied plots to the great Greek dramatists.

early doom ordained for him (even his chestnut steed knows all about it), capable of the tenderest compassion and of high-born courtesy to a suppliant enemy. In Ulysses, again, we meet the heroic adventurer, bravely enduring all the toils and terrors of a world that is still wonderland; a lover of his wife, too, to the end, and unable to find, even in the embraces of an ageless goddess in her garden-close in a fairy isle, any cure for his home-sickness—for, if he had no word equivalent to our "home" on his lips, yet he had the thing itself in his much-enduring heart.

Then there are the Homeric women, fair and wise and holy—hardly equalled for noble simplicity in the long galleries of heroic womanhood, from Sophocles to Shakespeare. There is Andromache, the loving young wife and mother who, in losing her chivalrous and valiant Hector, loses all that makes life worth living. There is Penelope, lacking nothing of the gentle dignity of the lady of a great house, even when that house is invaded by turbulent suitors who waste its substance and seduce her serving women, utterly destroying the kindly discipline of the household; keeping under hard trial her beauty and her honour, the respectful affection of her son, Telemachus, and her loyalty to her long-absent lord. Then there is the maiden Nausicaa on the eve of a fair marriage—perfect in her sense of household duties, her virginal delicacy, her charming common sense, her gracious and generous courage. Above all and before all, there is Helen, the innocent cause of the wars of the Greeks and Trojans alike, who is all the more impressive because we see so little of her and because Homer, unlike the makers of mediæval romances, is far too wise to attempt a catalogue of her charms—here is an early example of the "nothing too much" which is the secret of so many triumphs of Greek art! Because of this reticence the beauty of Helen has lived through the ages and made flaming altars of the hearts of innumerable poets.

Almost all our knowledge of Helen's beauty is derived from a few lines in the third book of the *Iliad* where she goes up to the walls of Troy to see the fight between Paris and Menelaus. "So speaking, the goddess put into her heart a longing for her husband of yore and her city and her father and mother. And straightway she veiled herself

with white linen, and went forth from her chamber, shedding a great tear." When the elders of Troy, seated on the wall, saw her coming, softly they spoke to one another winged words: "Small wonder that the Trojans and mailed Greeks should endure pain for many years for such a woman. Strangely like she is in face to some immortal spirit." The other Trojan women, when Troy fell, became the spoils of the victors, slaves and paramours; Cassandra lost her life, Andromache her little son, as later stories tell. But Helen was restored to her husband and her gleaming palace in Sparta, and we meet her again when Telemachus goes there, in hopes of getting news of his father. She is then once more the fairest of earthly queens, her beauty august as Dian's, and the perfect hostess, as she sits in her golden arras-covered chair and Philo, her hand-maiden, brings her the wonderful silver work-basket on wheels, which she received as a parting gift from Alcandra, wife of the King of Thebes in Egypt. And she recognises Telemachus by his likeness to his father whom she had known so well in the days when, under the compulsion of the Goddess of Love, she belonged to Paris for a season. It is with perfect good breeding that she alludes to the stormy past when, against her will, she was the cause of so much shedding of blood and of tears.

Many other of the Homeric persons live in remembrance, so clearly are their personalities set forth without waste of words; for it is what they *say* and *do*, not any comments of the poet, that defines them for the reader. The crowd, however, the nameless rank-and-file of the contending powers, is hardly a person of the drama, as it would be in an epic written in these democratic days. In the battle-pieces all we perceive of the nameless hosts is the bronzen glow of their harness, the hubbub of their cries, the storm of their stones—and they fade away into serried insignificance, even when the stage is given up to "man-slayings," successions of personal combats between the lesser heroes. It is true that, when the Greeks assemble to discuss great questions of military policy, even the fierce, overbearing king of men, Agamemnon, must take heed of the trend of their mass opinion. The beginnings of Greek democracy, which is the root of our own, are here clearly indicated.



*Photo : Braun.*

HOMER SINGING HIS POEMS

*From a drawing by Paul Chenagard in the Museum, Lyons.*

Before the invention of the art of writing, wandering bards, of whom Homer may have been one, journeyed from village to village reciting their songs.

But it is seldom indeed that the heroes and the deities trouble themselves about the rank-and-file. Thersites, the only demagogue who does raise his voice in bitter, sneering words—curiously enough, he is a man of very noble

ancestry, well-connected even for a Homeric personage —gets thrashed by Ulysses, who has a special dislike for him. The gods and goddesses are altogether human, except that they are immune from death (though not from pain, such as that of a wound) and have power and beauty beyond the lot of mankind. Just as they have had their love-affairs with mortals, gods and goddesses alike, to engender a Helen or an Achilles, so they descend into the press of human battle, to help this or that combatant in a duel or even to fight hand-to-hand themselves. They brag and revile one another before fighting in the very manner of mortals. Mars calls Minerva " dog-fly " before lunging at her with his spear, and when he is laid out by a jagged black stone, which hits him on the neck, and falls, " reaching over seven furlongs as he fell," the goddess taunts him in most unladylike fashion. Juno calls Diana a " shameless she-dog," grabs her bow and quiver, beats her sorely with them, and the huntress-deity, " ' full of tears,' fled like a wood-pigeon." Even more comical, to modern ideas, is the way Juno uses her charms, putting on her best immortal clothes and ear-rings with three gem stones in them, and borrowing the love-producing embroidered girdle of Venus on pretence of reconciling Oceanus and Tethys, in order to prevent Jove from carrying out the arrangement that the Trojans should win a battle. She also bribes Sleep to her husband, when he has had her embraces. She so well succeeds in arousing his passionate admiration that he proceeds to compare her favourably with seven other persons he has had love dealings with, before constructing out of a cloud a covert in which he can embrace her unseen. The characters of the deities are as clearly presented by Homer as those of the mortal heroes and heroines. Jove is imperious, genial, impatient, passion-swayed, a bit uxorious ; Juno, intent on securing victory for the Greeks, is a diplomatic great lady who knows just when her petulance has exhausted her lord's patience, and it is necessary to resort to caresses ; Apollo, prophet and minister of death, actively enforces his fateful decrees ; Minerva is the puissant war-goddess and a patron of art and industry, and also what we should call an excellent woman of business.

This familiarity with the denizens of Olympus, absurd as it seems to us moderns, is really a striking proof that Homer implicitly believed in them as personally engaged in the management of human affairs. The selfsame naïve faith inspires the legends of the Middle Ages in which we find the saints leaving Paradise to take part in the labours and diversions of humble persons, and even the Virgin Mary helping a devout worshipper to meet his (or her) beloved.

## § 2

### THE *ILIAD*

The story of Homer's *Iliad* is the story of the Trojan war. The myth begins with a quarrel of the gods. Eris threw among the guests at a wedding feast an apple bearing the inscription "for the fairest." Juno, Venus, and Minerva each claimed the apple, and Jupiter, the god above the gods, decided that Paris, younger son of Priam, king of Troy, should decide between them. It was Venus to whom Paris gave the apple and thus incurred the deadly hatred of the other two goddesses. Soon after his decision had been given, Paris sailed to Greece. He was entertained by Menelaus, king of Sparta, and he repaid the hospitality by making love to his wife, the incomparably beautiful Helen, whom he persuaded to elope with him to Troy. Menelaus called on the other Greek chieftains to aid him in recovering his wife, and after some hesitation the most famous of them, the subtle Ulysses, the hero Achilles, gigantic Ajax, Diomed, Nestor, the oldest of the chiefs, and Agamemnon, the brother of Menelaus, responded to the call. Agamemnon was appointed commander-in-chief of the Greek army. The great leader of the Trojan forces was Priam's elder son, Hector, husband of Andromache, and son of the famous Hecuba. The gods took sides in the contest. Juno and Minerva were naturally for the Greeks and against the Trojans, while Venus and Mars were on the other side. Neptune favoured the Greeks, and Jupiter and Apollo were neutral. The war had lasted for nine years when a quarrel occurred between Achilles and Agamemnon—and here the story of the *Iliad* begins.

It is the anger, not the valour, of Achilles which is the unifying motive of the *Iliad*. The "wraths" or feuds of heroes are common themes in Greek legends, as in those of the Scandinavian peoples. It was decreed, we are told in the first few lines, that innumerable ills should visit the Greeks, camped before Troy, because of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, the leader of the host. The camp was afflicted with a deadly pestilence, and, when Calchas, the seer, was asked to discover the cause, he tells Agamemnon that Apollo has been launching his envenomed arrows because of the king's refusal to ransom the daughter of Chryses, his priest, in a city the Greeks had taken and sacked, sharing the women and other spoil. Agamemnon yields the maiden, and tyrannically deprives Achilles of Briseis, his share of the captured women. Achilles returns to his tent and ship in bitter anger, and implores Thetis, his goddess mother, to bring the vengeance of heaven on the tyrant. Jove is loath to offend his wife, who is on the side of the Greeks, and sends a dream messenger to Agamemnon, counselling him to prepare battle against the Trojans in certain hope that it will bring about the fall of the city, which has already been besieged for ten years.

There is much high debate, both in the Greek camp and in the heavenly court, in the first two books, the second of which ends with a roll-call of the forces on either side. Thus early we notice the action shifting from earth to heaven and back again. Also this peculiarity of the speeches is apparent; they faithfully express the general characters of the speakers, whether human or divine, but there are none of the little intimate touches which modern writers employ to reveal individuality. This is a characteristic of Greek oratory in all ages, even to-day, and it is one of many proofs that the Greek genius refrains from personal detail, which might obscure the general effect, in all matters of art.

In the absence of Achilles the long battle goes against the Greeks, though their more famous champions perform many valiant deeds. The Olympians anxiously follow the course of the struggle, each of them doing what he or she can to help this side or that and to rescue special favourites. There are many dramatic full-length episodes of man-to-

man fighting; the background of the narrative is coloured crimson and bronzen, as it were, with manslayings. Paris challenges the Greek princes and is vanquished by Menelaus, but rescued by Venus, who threatens Helen that she will cause both hosts to wreak vengeance on her if she persists in refusing her embraces to her cowardly paramour. A truce between the armies is violated by Pandarus, who wounds Menelaus with an arrow. Diomed slays a number of the minor champions of Troy, including the treacherous Pandarus, wounds first Venus and then Mars—vain victories for which, as later legends aver, he paid with his life. The Greeks more than hold their own until Hector arms himself and takes part in the fray. There is a set duel ending in a draw, so to speak, between Hector and the greater Ajax (whom the lesser Ajax follows through legend, faithful as a shadow), and they exchange chivalrous words and gifts at parting. The action then shifts to "many-ridg'd Olympus," where Jove forbids all interference on the part of the other gods and goddesses, foretelling later on the misfortunes that await the Greeks. Hector at once prepares his host for an attack on the Greek camp in the morning. And that very night, the besieging forces being visited by "Panic, companion of Chill Fear," Ulysses, Phœnix, and Ajax go to Achilles to arrange a reconciliation, offering on behalf of Agamemnon to restore the still unravished Briseis (poor "maid of Brisa"! thrown from hand to hand, she has no name of her own!), to give him one of the king's three daughters in marriage, without requiring him to make a settlement on her, and to add to the other gifts seven fair cities. Achilles refuses in a speech which is the supreme climax of the Homeric oratory.

The translation is by Alexander Pope:

> O soul of battles, and thy people's guide!
> (To Ajax thus the first of Greeks replied)
> Well hast thou spoke; but at the tyrant's name
> My rage rekindles, and my soul's on flame:
> 'Tis just resentment, and becomes the brave;
> Disgraced, dishonour'd, like the vilest slave!
> Return, then, heroes! and our answer bear,
> The glorious combat is no more my care;
> Not till, amidst yon sinking navy slain,
> The blood of Greeks shall dye the sable main;

Not till the flames, by Hector's fury thrown,
Consume your vessels, and approach my own;
Just there, the impetuous homicide shall stand,
There cease his battle, and there feel our hand.

It is an eventful night. Diomed and Ulysses enter the Trojan camp in the darkness, slaying Rhesus and taking his snow-white steeds. This is a thrilling exploit, wonderfully well told. But, led by Hector, the Trojans are irresistible, and even Neptune could not have saved the Greek camp from capture but for the love-stratagem of Juno. Perhaps the real "moral" of the *Iliad* is to be expressed in the lines:

Two things greater than all things are:
One is Love, the other is War.

The great turning-point in the tremendous drama, which stirs heaven as profoundly as earth, comes when Patroclus intervenes, wearing the armour of Achilles and leading his Myrmidons to battle. Hector kills Patroclus and a nobler "wrath" lifts the epic to a loftier range of emotion. Even the Greek critics, trained in the higher and more intense life of Greek tragedy, have seen that anger at the loss of a girl slave was an inadequate motive for "sulking in one's tent"; only the sublime genius of Homer could have carried it off so well.

Achilles is wild with anger and grief at the death of his dearest comrade; the loss of his armour (equivalent to the loss of his guns by a modern soldier) touches him in his honour as a warrior. Vulcan, at the suit of Thetis, forges for the hero a new suit of harness; the description of the shield is one of the most famous passages in Homer and, now we know so much of Mycenæan art, a priceless piece of historical evidence.

The translation is by Ernest Myers:

First fashioned he a shield great and strong, adorning it all over, and set thereto a shining rim, triple, bright-glancing, and therefrom a silver baldrick. Five were the folds of the shield itself; and therein fashioned he much cunning work from his wise heart.

There wrought he the earth, and the heavens, and the sea, and the unwearying sun, and the moon waxing to the full, and the signs every one wherewith the heavens are crowned, Pleiads and Hyads and Orion's

might, and the Bear that men call also the Wain, her that turneth in her place, and watcheth Orion, and alone hath no part in the baths of Ocean.

Also he fashioned therein two fair cities of mortal men. In the one were espousals and marriage feasts, and beneath the blaze of torches they were leading the brides from their chambers through the city, and loud rose the bridal song. And young men were whirling in the dance, and among them flutes and viols sounded high; and the women standing each at her door were marvelling. But the folk were gathered in the assembly place; for there a strife was arisen, two men striving about the blood-price of a man slain; the one claimed to pay full atonement, expounding to the people, but the other denied him and would take naught; and both were fain to receive arbitrament at the hand of a daysman. And the folk were cheering both, as they took part on either side. And heralds kept order among the folk, while the elders on polished stones were sitting in the sacred circle, and holding in their hands staves from the loud-voiced heralds. Then before the people they rose up and gave judgment each in turn. And in the midst lay two talents of gold, to be given unto him who should plead among them most righteously.

This is only part of the decoration of this famous shield. No wonder that when Vulcan had finished his task and had given it to the goddess Thetis, the mother of Achilles, "she like a falcon sprang down from snowy Olympus bearing from Vulcan the glittering arms."

Achilles is reconciled to Agamemnon and, clad in his new armour, leads out the Myrmidons to battle, slaying many Trojan champions but seeking solely the life of Hector.

So packed is the narrative that it is no more possible to indicate here every important incident[1] than it would be to exhibit the characters and careers of, say, all Thackeray's people in a brief abstract. Let me give a "close-up," as it were, of the most tragical episode of Hector's death at the ruthless hands of Achilles.

Hector, "bound by deadly Fate," stands before the walls of Troy at the Scæan Gate. His old father, Priam, is on the walls; he sees Achilles rushing on "like the star that rises in harvest-time"—the Hound of Orion that brings fever on men. Both Priam and Hecuba implore their son to come within the walls, but he is deaf to their entreaties.

Achilles draws nigh and Hector awaits him, like a mountain serpent in his den, full of poison and full of wrath. But when Achilles is on him, his bronzen armour ablaze, the

[1] There are 15,673 lines in the *Iliad*, 12,889 in the *Odyssey*; and something vital is said or done in 90 per cent. of these lines.

sense of doom overawes him and he takes to flight. Achilles pursues him round the walls of Troy, like a falcon pursuing a dove. All the Olympians are watching the twain; Jove asks—Shall we save Hector or allow Achilles to slay him? Minerva protests against the idea of saving a mortal doomed long ago by destiny. At the third circuit of the walls, as Jove "hung his golden balances and sets in them two lots of drear death," one for either combatant, Hector's scale sinks and from that moment nobody, not even Apollo, can save him. Minerva, who darted down to the battlefield, assumes the form of Deiphobus, Hector's brother, and pretends she has come to help him. Thus heartened, Hector turns to defy Achilles to combat. Before fighting he proposes a chivalrous pact: that, whichever of them falls, the other shall restore his body to receive the funeral rites due from his friends. Achilles refuses sternly; there can be no pact between them, any more than between men and lions or wolves and sheep.

Achilles hurls his spear; Hector crouches, and it flies over his head; Minerva, unseen of Hector, restores it to the Greek hero. Hector hurls his spear, but misses; he calls to Deiphobus for a second spear. But Deiphobus has vanished, and it flashes on Hector that Minerva has played him false. He knows his doom is on him, but draws his sword and attacks his foe, hoping to do something memorable before he dies. Achilles mortally wounds him with a spear-thrust in the neck; fallen and dying he implores the victor not to let his body be devoured by dogs from the Greek ships. Achilles, his hate unsated, will brook no thought of ransom for the corpse: "would that my heart's desire," he replies, "could bid me carve thy flesh and eat it now, for the evil thou hast done me."

> To whom thus Hector of the glancing helm,
> Dying: "I know thee well; nor did I hope
> To change thy purpose; iron is thy soul.
> But see that on thy head I bring not down
> The wrath of Heaven, when by the Scæan Gate
> The hand of Paris, with Apollo's aid,
> Brave warrior as thou art, shall strike thee down."

Even as he speaks, he dies and his spirit passes to the viewless shades. Achilles foully misuses his body, piercing

the feet, and binding them to his chariot with leathern thongs, and trailing the noble head in the dust, as he drives at breakneck speed back to the Greek camp.

It is not the end. The funeral rites are paid to Patroclus and games held in his honour. Then, cured of his madness of sorrow and wrath, Achilles repents of his desecration of a noble enemy's corpse, and receives Priam with kindness and reverence, granting withal an eleven days' truce while the funeral rites are rendered to Hector. Yet the Greeks of the days to come, with their bitter loathing of any insult to the bodies of the dead (which Hesiod includes in his list of the five deadly sins), never quite forgave Achilles for his brutal and barbarian frenzy. Tragical though his life was, overshadowed by the certainty of death in his prime, he was never made the hero of a Greek tragedy.

The *Iliad* finishes with the funeral of "Hector, tamer of horses." Andromache, his stricken wife, is the real heroine of the story. Troy is destroyed by the Greeks, but amid the clamour of the men of war the reader hears "the far-off echo of a woman's sigh." There is no mention in the *Iliad* of the deaths of Achilles and Paris. But both were killed during the siege. In the *Odyssey* the ashes of Achilles are said to have been buried in a golden urn, and Sophocles tells us that Paris was mortally wounded by Philoctetes just before the capture of Troy.

## § 3

### THE WANDERINGS OF ULYSSES

The *Odyssey* is the story of the wanderings of Ulysses after the fall of Troy and the victory of the Greek host. Menelaus had recovered his wife, Helen, and she had returned with him to Sparta. The other Greek heroes had also gone home, all but Ulysses, whose wife Penelope with their son Telemachus waited with anxious hearts in his kingdom of Ithaca.

There is not the electrical atmosphere of doom in the *Odyssey* which at times affects the reader of the *Iliad* like the imminence of a thunderstorm. When Bentley said that

the former was written for women and the latter for men he put into definite words an indefinable feeling which occurs to all careful students of Homer; except for one atrocious episode of revenge and torture, the manners of the people in the story of Ulysses' wanderings are milder and there is far more of what may be called domestic interest. Indeed, it is difficult not to feel that the *Odyssey* was written in a later and more civilised age, or at any rate at a period when the uncivilising effects of a great war had passed away, and those who are faithful to the old idea that they were both the work of one poet, will believe that he composed the *Iliad* in the fierce prime of life and the *Odyssey* in his serene old age. The temperamental gap between the two poems is far greater than that between "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained."

The *Odyssey* falls so naturally into six sections, each consisting of four books, that it seems to have been so designed by the author. The first section is mainly concerned with the trouble Telemachus, the wandering hero's only son, has with the suitors for his mother Penelope's hand and goodly estate, and his journey to Pylos and Sparta in quest of news of his lost father.

Ten years had passed since the sacking of Troy, and nothing had been heard at home of Ulysses' fate. He had failed to bring his men back to rocky Ithaca, for they had perished through their folly in killing and eating the oxen of the Sun, and he himself had been cast away on a lonely isle, the abode of the nymph Calypso. She wanted him to forget his mortal wife and marry her, and to that intent had kept him in her wondrous island all the while. Neptune, who had never forgiven Ulysses for killing his ogre of a son, Polyphemus, happening to be away on a visit to the Ethiopians, "the utmost of mankind," the other Olympians get together and arrange Ulysses' return home. Mercury is sent to tell Calypso of the decision, while Minerva appears in disguise to Telemachus and advises him to seek news of his father from his father's friends, Nestor and Menelaus.

The next day Telemachus sends the criers round the town to summon an assembly to hear his complaints of his mother's suitors who are eating him out of house and home.

Antinous, the bully of the suitors, blames Penelope for all the trouble; she had sent beguiling messages to every one of them, and had for nearly four years tricked them with the weaving of a pall she said was for Laertes (the father of Ulysses, and a very old and weary man), working by day and undoing the work at night. The other suitors are insolent, but Minerva in a new disguise presents herself as Mentor, and gets Telemachus the ship he requires for his voyage. So he visits Nestor at Pylos, who tells him about the murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra, but has no news of his father. Nestor advises him to go to Sparta and see if Menelaus knows anything. He and the son of his wise old host, Pisistratus, set out for Lacedaemon in a chariot and pair. At Sparta Helen recognises him, and they all weep over the great days that have been. It is a joy to the young men (yes, and to every reader) to see the ever-beautiful Helen, and to hear what she and her husband have to say. The latter tells the company how, when the famous Wooden Horse had been brought into Troy, Helen walked round it, striking the hollow ambush with her hand and imitating the voice of each Greek prince's wife—so faithfully that, but for the example of restraint shown by Ulysses, some of them would have answered back or even leapt out of the horse. What is more to the purpose, Menelaus tells Telemachus that his father is in Calypso's lonely isle; which information, with other facts about the unhappy adventures of the Greek heroes, Menelaus had obtained by disguising himself as a seal and seizing Proteus, seer of the deep, and holding him tight as he variously disguised himself (as lion, dragon, panther, boar, a limpid stream, a shady tree), until the "Old Man of the Sea" was tired and compelled to answer questions.

The next two sections deal with the wondrous adventures of Ulysses. The fair Calypso obeys the behest of Olympus and allows Ulysses to go; though she cannot understand why he wants to leave one who is so much better-looking than his wife and undergo more hardship on the stormy seas. However, she lends him the tools to build a ship and equips him, and so Ulysses sails off to Phæacia, keeping the Great Bear on the left as the Nymph enjoins. Neptune, however, on his way back from the Ethiopians, spies him,



*Photo : Rischgitz Collection.*

ULYSSES IN PHÆACIA," BY RUBENS.

Ulysses was shipwrecked on the shore of Phæacia and was succoured by the beautiful Nausicaa, the king's daughter

guesses that the other deities have stolen a march on him, and stirs the sea with his trident and raises a terrible storm. Ulysses is washed overboard, but Ino, in the guise of a seagull, lends him her magic veil, which keeps him up till he can swim ashore, when he throws the veil into the sea for Ino to catch it. So he comes to Phæacia, is helped by Nausicaa, daughter of King Alcinous, and hospitably entertained in the King's wonderful palace standing in its glorious garden full of fruit trees, vines, and flowers in bloom all the year round.

Ulysses has been cast up on the shore of Phæacia unkempt and naked. And when he is met by Nausicaa, her servant maids take to their heels. But the Princess is kind and sensible. She gives him clothes and food and directs him to her father's palace. The quotation is from Butcher and Lang's translation :

> When thou art within the shadow of the halls and the court, pass quickly through the great chamber, till thou comest to my mother, who sits at the hearth in the light of the fire, weaving yarn of sea-purple stain, a wonder to behold. Her chair is leaned against a pillar, and her maidens sit behind her. And there my father's throne leans close to hers, wherein he sits and drinks his wine, like an immortal. Pass thou by him, and cast thy hands about my mother's knees, that thou mayest see quickly and with joy the day of thy returning, even if thou art from a very far country. If but her heart be kindly disposed toward thee, then is there hope that thou shalt see thy friends, and come to thy well-builded house, and to thine own country.

The Phæacians hold games and a great feast in honour of their guest and give him presents—garments and a talent of gold to begin with—so that he can eat his supper with a glad heart. At the feast Demodocus sings the Sack of Troy and the Sally of the Greeks from the Wooden Horse, and Ulysses is so affected that he sheds tears which are perceived only by King Alcinous, who makes a speech and says the stranger ought to tell them his name. He tells his name, his home, and his amazing adventures since leaving Troy. He has sacked the city of the Cicones ; he has visited the land of the lotus-eaters, where some of his men wished to tarry. " Whosoever of them did eat the honey-sweet fruit of the lotus, had no more wish to bring tidings nor to come back, but there he chose to abide with the lotus-eating men ever feeding on the lotus and forgetful

of his homeward way." He has met the fearsome one-eyed Cyclops, Polyphemus, from whom he and his men escaped bound under the bellies of the ogre's sheep. He has visited Æolus, who dwelt " in a floating island," from whom he received a fair wind as a present with all the other winds in the world tied up in a bag. Unfortunately his men untied the bag and his ship was driven back to Æolus, who this time refused to receive him. He has been to the isle of Ææa, where Circe turned his men into swine. Fortunately, as Ulysses hurried through the sacred glades in the endeavour to rescue his followers, he met the god Mercury, " in the likeness of a young man with the first down on his lip," and the god gave him a herb " black at the root, but the flower was like to milk," which saved him from Circe's enchantment. With her he stayed a year and then he once more began his wanderings, his men again in human form. But the climax of all these tremendous adventures is the descent into Hades, where Ulysses talks with Tiresias, the seer, and is told of the manner of his end : " Death shall come to you very gently from the sea and shall take you when you are full of years and peace of mind." He also talks with the ghost of his mother, and hears what is happening to his wife and son and old father in Ithaca. Then Proserpine sends up the ghosts of the wives and the daughters of great kings and heroes of old time, and he makes each of them tell her story. Then he converses with the ghost of Agamemnon, who warns him not to be too open with his own wife, and of Achilles, who hears about the brave conduct of his son, Neoptolemus, in the Wooden Horse, and strides off over a meadow of asphodel, exulting in the lad's prowess. He sees Minos with his golden sceptre judging the dead ; he sees Tityus, Tantalus, and Sisyphus enduring their everlasting punishments. He gazes on the mighty Hercules, bow in hand and arrow on the string, wearing about his breast his golden pictured belt.

After leaving Hades, Ulysses and his men came to the narrow strait where " on the one hand Scylla and on the other mighty Charybdis in terrible wise sucked down the salt sea water." Ulysses thus describes his last adventure :

I kept pacing through my ship, till the surge loosened the sides from the keel, and the wave swept her along stript of her tackling, and brake her

mast clean off at the keel. Now the backstay fashioned of an oxhide had been flung thereon; therewith I lashed together both keel and mast, and sitting thereon I was borne by the ruinous winds.

Then verily the West Wind ceased to blow with a rushing storm, and swiftly withal the South Wind came, bringing sorrow to my soul, that so I might again measure back that space of sea, the way to deadly Charybdis. All the night was I borne, but with the rising of the sun I came to the rock of Scylla, and to dread Charybdis. Now she had sucked down her salt sea water, when I was swung up on high to the tall fig-tree, whereto I clung like a bat, and could find no sure rest for my feet nor place to stand, for the roots spread far below and the branches hung aloft out of reach, long and large, and overshadowed Charybdis. Steadfast I clung till she should spew forth mast and keel again; and late they came to my desire. . . . And I let myself drop down hands and feet, and plunged heavily in the midst of the waters beyond the long timbers, and sitting on these I rowed hard with my hands. . . . Thence for nine days was I borne, and on the tenth night the gods brought me nigh to the isle of Ogygia.

After he finished his story King Alcinous sends him to Ithaca with all his presents in one of the Phæacian ships that were so clever they could have found the way by themselves. So we return with him to a workaday world, where he must tread warily to escape being slain with his son by his wife's suitors. The sections that follow are the least enthralling portion of the Homeric epics. Only his old dog recognises him at sight; and cannot follow and fawn on him, for he dies in the moment of recognition. Ulysses enters his house as a beggar and undergoes many humiliations, for unfaithful servants insult him and the suitors have little of that respect for a suppliant guest, which recognises that courtesy is the better part of charity, and is the most beautiful and homely thing in the life of the Homeric world. The irony of circumstances has its poignant moments when the destined avenger, the inexorable and irresistible warrior, is treated as a vagabond while he is preparing his plot for the destruction of the spoilers of his household—men who are blind to heaven's warnings and insolently ignore the heaven-descended rules of hospitality. When the reckoning comes, it is not a battle, but a massacre; and the vengeance Ulysses and Telemachus wreak on the unfaithful servants is an instance of "the disgusting" which the Greek dramatists abhorred as inhuman, inartistic, un-Greek. Yet the suitors were held to be punished according to their deserts, for the ill-

treatment of a suppliant is one of Hesiod's five deadly sins. Ulysses and Penelope are locked in one another's arms at last, and Minerva miraculously prolongs the first night of tears and rejoicing after so many long years of hardship and sadness.

This is the story of the *Odyssey*. And after three thousand years when men read it,

> They hear like ocean on a western beach
> The surge and thunder of the Odyssey.

## § 4

### ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

None of the English translations of Homer have been completely successful; naturally and necessarily so, because the unique distinction of the Homeric epics is that they combine the freshness and simplicity of a primitive race, of a phase of the world's childhood, with a perfect technique of expression, a complete mastery of thought over its medium. This combination, as Matthew Arnold pointed out in his book *On Translating Homer*, involves the four chief qualities of the Homeric style: rapidity; directness of thought; plainness of diction; and nobleness. No translation, whether in verse or prose, has yet succeeded in keeping all these four qualities throughout.

Prose translations, however faithful and well-written, cannot possibly give a just impression of the poetical beauty and grandeur of the Homeric poems. The translations by famous English poets have their merits as well as their demerits; all of them fail to keep one or more of the characteristic Homeric qualities. Chapman's has several of these qualities; his fourteen-syllable line has something of the weight and movement of the Homeric hexameter; his style is plain-spoken, fresh, vigorous, and to a certain extent rapid. On the whole, it seems to deserve the noble sonnet Keats wrote in its honour. But it is full of the extravagance and fantastical humour of the Elizabethan age, and that painstaking reverence which prevented the translators of the Bible from giving rein to their fancy did not debar Chapman from "tormenting" the plain and

direct thought of Homer. In Hector's famous speech at his parting from Andromache, Homer makes him say: "Nor does my own heart so bid me (to keep safe behind the walls) since I have learned to be staunch always, and to fight among the foremost of the Trojans, busy on behalf of my father's great glory and my own." In Chapman's version these plain, straightforward thoughts become:

> The spirit I first did breathe
> Did never teach me this; much less, since the contempt of death
> Was settled in me, *and my mind knew what a worthy was,*
> *Whose office is to lead in fight, and give no danger pass*
> *Without improvement. In this fire must Hector's trial shine:*
> *Here must his country, father, friends, be in him made divine.*

See how it is all teased out into Elizabethan fantastic subtlety! Hector goes on to say: "For well I know this in my mind and in my heart, the day will be when sacred Troy shall perish." Chapman's version is:

> And such a *stormy* day shall come, in mind and soul I know,
> When sacred Troy *shall shed her towers, for tears of overthrow.*

Pope is another famous poet who has attempted the perilous task, but his literary style, better fitted for a sage's philosophising than to describe a soldier lighting his camp-fire, conveys no sense of the plain naturalness of Homer. Yet in great moments Pope is singularly successful; he then has the rapidity, the nobleness, and often the simple, unromantic language which give a partial impression of the original. A good average example of Pope's prodigious talent is this rendering of a passage in Sarpedon's speech quoted a few days before he died by an English statesman who had played his part in arranging that Treaty of Paris which concluded the Seven Years' War. It was Lord Grenville, who at the time (1762) expressed in Homer's words the satisfaction he felt at helping to give his country peace.

> Could all our care elude the gloomy grave
> Which claims no less the fearful than the brave,
> For lust of fame I shall not vainly dare
> In fighting fields, nor urge thy soul to war:
> But since, alas! ignoble age must come,
> Disease, and death's inexorable doom;
> The life which others pay, let us bestow,
> And give to fame what we to nature owe.

Pope is too " literary " to convey any sense of the plain thinking and plain diction of Homer, but his translation has great merits, and the modern tendency is to grant it a much higher place than that assigned by Matthew Arnold. William Cowper, that gentle and perplexed spirit, has neither the force nor the rapidity of Pope driving his heroic couplet as a Greek hero his chariot, and he is at his best in " still life " descriptions.

Lord Derby had not a tithe of Cowper's poetic gift, but his faithful version of the *Iliad*, an honest and untiring attempt, as he said, " to infuse into an almost literal English version something of the spirit, as well as the simplicity, of the great original," has come much closer to success than any other. An excellent example of this translation is the moving passage in which Andromache sees from the walls of Troy the desecration of her husband's corpse by the triumphant Achilles—a dreadful scene which impresses us all the more because it follows so soon after the account of the poor lady's arrangements to provide Hector with a new embroidered robe and a hot bath on his safe return from battle :

Then from the house she rushed, like one distract,
With beating heart ; and with her went her maids.
But upon the tow'r she reach'd, where stood the crowd,
And mounted on the wall, and look'd around,
And saw the body trailing in the dust,
Which the fleet steeds were dragging to the ships,
And sudden darkness overspread her eyes ;
Backward she fell, and gasp'd her spirit away.
Far off were flung the adornments of her head,
The net, the fillet, and the woven bands ;
The nuptial veil by golden Venus given,
That day when Hector of the glancing helm
Led from Ĕtion's house his wealthy bride.
The sisters of her husband round her press'd,
And held, as in the deadly swoon she lay.
But when her breath and spirit returned again,
With sudden burst of anguish thus she cried :
" Hector, oh woe is me ! to misery
We both were born alike ; thou here in Troy,
In Priam's royal palace ; I in Thebes,
By wooded Placos, in Ĕtion's house,
Who nurs'd my infancy ; unhappy he
Unhappier I ! Would I had ne'er been born ! "

Only a poet with Swinburne's mastery of blank verse could hope to make a nobler version of the *Iliad* than Lord Derby's, and to come nearer (yet still how far away!) to achieving the miracle of pouring the old wine of Homer's poetry into new metrical bottles.

A very interesting experiment in Homeric translations is the incomplete version of the *Odyssey* by William Morris, in which that entrancing poet displays his power of rapid and stirring narrative, his gift of creating a fresh, other-worldly atmosphere, and his sympathy with the saga spirit to great advantage. He shows us the Homeric scenes, it is true, through a misty glamour half-way between that of fairy-tales and that of the stark Northern epics. But, after all, the Homeric heroes were nearer to the Vikings in personality than any other adventurers of literature—they might almost be defined as types midway between the Northmen and the Normans, for the history revealed by picks rather than by pens clearly shows that they had entered into the material civilisation of others to possess it, and to enjoy a luxury and a lavishness which was in advance of their spiritual growth. The moment when the suitors of Penelope are visited by a sudden sense of impending doom, only understood by Theoclymenus, is thus presented by the author of *The Earthly Paradise*:

So he spake; but Pallas Athene amidst the wooers' crew
Awoke undying laughter, and their minds astray she drew;
For now all they were laughing with the jaws of other men,
And flesh bloodstained they were eating, and the eyes of them as then
Were filled with tears, and the thoughts of their souls into sorrow strayed.
Then the godlike Theoclymenus he spake to them and said:
"Why bear ye this bale, ye unhappy? For your heads and your faces outright,
And the knees that are beneath you are wrapt about in night,
And let loose is the voice of wailing, and wetted with tears are your cheeks,
And blood the hall-walls staineth and the goodly panels streaks;
And the porch is full of man-shapes and fulfilled is the garth of the stead,
As they went 'neath the dusk and the darkness, and the sun from the heavens is dead;
And lo! how the mist of evil draws up and all about!"

Certainly we get the same eerie impression of an omen, felt as a warning only by the righteous man, which is communicated in Homer's actual words. This Morrisian

version is unequalled for the vigour and luminous quality of all its open-air passages. Some critics take exception to the occasional somewhat undignified and harsh renderings of stock epithets and are jarred when the man of many wiles is styled " the shifty." But it seems to have all the merits of Chapman's translation and to lack the latter's all-pervading fault—the teasing-out of the plain thought of the original and the elaboration of its plain diction into Elizabethan subtlety and ornateness.

Those who wish to get as clear an insight into the noble lucidness of Homeric poetry (which, none the less, is like a diamond in that it cannot be seen through) as is possible without a knowledge of Greek cannot do better than procure Lord Derby's and William Morris's translations, of which inexpensive editions can be procured.

As for prose translations, they abound, and, though uncouth in proportion to their literal precision, will help the student to follow the Homeric narrative in exact detail. Butcher and Lang's translation of the *Odyssey* at times rises to prose-poetry. And the curiously matter-of-fact translation in prose (at times too prosaic) by Samuel Butler, the great ironist and author of *Erewhon*, is an excellent tonic against the conventional " translatorese " which lends an air of unreality to the very real and easily realised life of the Homeric poems. Butler's attempted proof that the *Odyssey* was written by a woman, none other than the wise and beautiful Nausicaa, must have been begun as an essay in his peculiar irony, but he seems in the end to have persuaded himself of the truth of his fantastical theory.

## § 5

### HOMERIC SIMILES

The use of simile in the Homeric poems is a characteristic feature which has been imitated by all makers of the " artificial epic " from Virgil to Milton. The Homeric similes are not mere decorations, like the pictures in an illuminated missal. They are dramatic; that is, they arise out of the action and add impressiveness to what follows, by leading the thoughts of the reader up through

some similar, but less familiar, picture to a keener realisation of the wonder or terror or pitifulness of a scene or an event. They are like the illustrations to a book the inner significance of which has been grasped by the illustrator, who yet allows his imagination to sport with the details of his picture. " Secure of the main likeness," comments Pope, " Homer makes no scruple to play with the circumstances." His similes thus afford a contrast to those in the Old Testament (for example, Job's comparison of the inconstancy of friends to the failure of water in the desert, when springs on which the caravans relied are found to be dry), for the Hebraic similes dispense with non-essential details. The *Iliad* contains about a hundred and eighty full-length similes, pictures complete in themselves, and the *Odyssey* only forty. This difference is inevitable, for the *Odyssey*, though full of marvels and marvellous adventures, has not nearly so many moments of tense excitement—dramatic " thrills," as it were—as the *Iliad* with its warlike action and movements of armed hosts in a restricted arena.

The range of Homeric simile extends from the lowliest to the loftiest matters. Like the Old Testament writers, Homer delights in a homely image ; thus, like them, he finds similitudes in the work of the threshing floor and the winnowing fan. The Hebrew chronicler (in 2 Kings xxi. 13) writes : " I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down " ; and Homer finds as homely a similitude, when he compares the obstinate Ajax, beset by enemies, to an ass which has got into a cornfield and is being cudgelled in vain by boys. Sometimes Homer uses a sequence of similes ; as when, in a description of the Greeks leaving the quarters by the ships for the place of assembly, they are successively likened to fire devouring a forest (because of their gleaming armour), to a flight of clamouring birds (because of their noise and haste), to innumerable leaves (when they are mustered in a fluctuating mass), to buzzing flies (as an excited hum is heard from the assembly), and to flocks of goats parted by goat-herds (when they are marshalled in divisions by their leaders).

Again, in order to heighten the terror of warlike episodes by contrasting them with small, innocent affairs, he tells us that Apollo throws down the Greek rampart as easily

as a child destroys its sand-castle on the sea-beach, or makes Achilles rebuke his comrade Patroclus for weeping like a little girl running by her mother's side and clinging to her dress, and looking up in tears until she is picked up and carried.

His more majestical images are suggested by fire—especially, conflagrations in a mountain forest—torrents, snowstorms, lightning, and winds battling together as so often occurs in the landlocked Ægean. A fine example of the majestical simile is found when Minerva invests Achilles with her ægis, thus encircling his head with a golden cloud from which a flame is made to shoot forth. The Rev. W. C. Green's translation of *The Similes of Homer's Iliad* contains the following fine version of this most striking simile :

> As from an island city, seen afar,
> The smoke goes up to heaven, when foes besiege :
> And all day long in grievous battle strive
> The leaguered townsmen from this city wall :
> But soon, at set of sun, blaze after blaze,
> Are lit the beacon-fires, and high the glare
> Shoots up for all that dwell around to see,
> That they may come with ships to aid their stress :
> Such light blazed heavenward from Achilles' head.

The lion, by the way, provides no fewer than thirty comparisons in the *Iliad*, the most notable of which likens Ajax, defending the body of Patroclus, to a lion guarding his cubs, glaring in his might and drawing down his brows. These similes are often jewels of history. The image of the beleaguered island-city, kindling its fiery S.O.S. to bring help from its neighbours, reminds us that it was an age when such raids were common, as waves of armed emigrants came down overland from Central Europe, and, having built or seized ships, sought to acquire footholds in the Southern seas by piratical attacks. And the frequency of leonine similes tells us by implication that the lion was a familiar beast on the mainland—a fact confirmed by Herodotus and Xenophon, who state that he was still met with in Macedonia, Thessaly, and Thrace in the fifth century B.C. Homer indeed gives us history as well as a story, and we are now in a position, thanks to the wonderful results of excavation since Schliemann's epoch-making discoveries, to detach the historical from the legendary and imaginative matter,

and to make a picture, correct in its main outlines, of the real Homeric world. Homer, the book, is not an artistic myth; it is the record, howsoever distorted and overlaid and "restored," of a life that was actually lived by men more like than unlike ourselves.

## § 6

### THE HOMERIC WORLD

Something must be said as to the great controversy started by Wolf's *Prolegomena* (published at Halle in 1795) as to the way in which the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* came into being and attained their present form. Wolf's theory was an expression of the all-questioning spirit that, in the domain of politics, broke out with explosive force in the French Revolution, and, in the sphere of historical criticism, prompted Ihne and Niebuhr to show the legendary nature of the early annals of Rome. It attempted to prove four main points. The author contended that (1) the Homeric poems were composed without the aid of writing, which is not mentioned in them and, in 950 B.C., was either unknown to the Greeks or not yet used in the making of literary records, and that the poems out of which the two epics were made up, were passed on by oral recitation, during which process they were much altered; (2) when written down, about 550 B.C., "revisers" and literary critics went on polishing the poems and altering them to suit their tastes in art; (3) the artistic unity of both epics is the result of this artificial treatment in later ages; (4) the original lays-out of which the epics are built up were the work of several authors, though it would never be possible to show where the component parts begin and end.

There is nothing dogmatic in Wolf's famous book (which is written in Latin), and he did not deny the existence of a personal Homer, a poet of genius who "began the weaving of the web." Moreover, he admits that the argument convinced his head but not his heart, so to speak. Turning from his theory to read the poems once more as poetry, plunging into the clear rushing stream of the story yet again, the harmonious consistency of it all renews the old

irresistible impression of a personal unity, and he is angry with the reasoned scepticism which has destroyed his belief in a single master-poet. Into the controversial maze created by his book it is impossible to enter here. The ancient conception of authorship must be abandoned ; it is comparable with the faith of simple folk who believe that the Bible in its present form was handed down out of Heaven. The very name " Homer," which means " piecer-together," is sufficient proof that the belief in a single authorship, one and indivisible, cannot be maintained. And every part of the poems bears the marks of revision ; for example, it is abundantly clear that barbaric episodes have been toned down to suit the taste of later and gentler ages when the Greek horror of " the disgusting " had so prevailed as to insist that murders should take place off the stage.

In the long and still unsettled controversy as to the origin and authorship, the poets—and the professional scholars in whom something of a poet survives—have always leant to the side of personal unity. In England the impression has always prevailed, and is perhaps gathering force to-day, that less importance is to be attached to the discrepancies with which the scholar-critic is chiefly concerned than to the sympathetic insight of men of poetic genius such as Schiller, who called Wolf's theory " barbaric," and Goethe, who, though at first inclined to accept it, on second thoughts said in a letter to Schiller : " I am more than ever convinced of the unity and indivisibility of the poem (the *Iliad*)." The opinion of Matthew Arnold, a ripe scholar as well as a poet full of the Greek spirit, is weighty indeed : " The insurmountable obstacle to believing the *Iliad* a consolidated work of several poets is this —that the work of great masters is unique ; and the *Iliad* has a great master's genuine stamp, and that stamp is *the grand style*."

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## III

# THE STORY OF THE BIBLE

BY DR. E. W. BARNES, SC.D., F.R.S., BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM

THE collection of ancient books which we call the Bible is of incomparable value and importance. It has done more for the moral and religious progress of mankind than any other literature. As a record of the most significant process in human civilisation, of clear thought and right feeling developing together for a thousand years, it is unique. Some books in it reach levels of artistic excellence which have never been surpassed. And, moreover, the translation into English which we know as the Authorised Version is the foremost classic in our language.

If we inquire why the Bible can be regarded as a single surpassingly great book, the answer must be that there is in it unity, no less than sincerity, beauty, and strength. It has really but one theme—man's search for God. Behind history and poetry, prophecy and drama, gospel and epistle, there lies an intense eagerness to understand God's ways, to realise His nature, to feel His presence. Yet, fortunately, the Bible is not a collection of theological treatises. It is as varied as the life of man, a mirror of human endurance and weakness, triumph and failure. Above all it is a living history of spiritual progress. For this reason, from end to end of the Bible, there are books and passages of supreme excellence. They were written by men passionately in earnest, inspired by a pure and lofty faith, and convinced that they bore a great message for mankind. Consequently the language of these men is clear and simple, their thought direct and vigorous. Like all great artists they are economical, sparing in their use of words. Their work has a quality which "finds" us, a something which we term inspiration. Coleridge, who loved the Bible and was more than ordinarily sensitive to its appeal, said of it: "In every

generation and wherever the light of revelation has shone, men of all ranks, conditions, and states of mind have found in the Bible a correspondent for every movement towards the better felt in their own hearts."

We must always remember that the Bible is not one book : it is many. In the Old Testament there is the best literature produced by the Hebrew race during well-nigh a thousand years. The New Testament, on the other hand, contains the literature, not of a nation, but of a movement. It is a collection of Greek works, written within less than a century, which describe the life of Jesus of Nazareth and the early development of the Christian Faith. But the connection between the Old and New Testaments is intimate. Each is a product of Hebrew religious genius. Of the writers in the New Testament, all seem to have been Jews, save possibly St. Luke, and his racial origin is doubtful. Moreover, to the historian, Christ is in the direct line of the great Hebrew prophets. St. Paul, though he became the Apostle to the Gentiles, thought as a Jew and not as a Greek. St. John used Greek ideas, but he was a spiritual descendant of Ezekiel. Christianity, in fact, was a natural outgrowth of Judaism.

To the student of history and of religious thought, the New Testament is the most important part of the Bible ; yet, as literature, it is on the whole inferior to the earlier writings. By the time of Christ, the Greek language, as spoken by the Jews of the Levant, had lost its purity. Not even the sincerity and enthusiasm of the New Testament writers could make it a perfect medium for literary art. Moreover, between words and thought a natural harmony exists only if the ideas which a people develop are expressed in their own tongue. When Jewish religious understanding was poured into a Greek mould, such harmony was marred. Throughout the New Testament there are passages which are astonishingly fine ; but, speaking generally, we miss the sustained excellence of many Old Testament books. Wordsworth said truly that " the grand store-houses of enthusiastic and meditative imagination . . . are the prophetical and lyrical parts of the Holy Scriptures." Because we describe such storehouses and show how they were built and filled, we shall of necessity give to the New

Testament less consideration than its intrinsic importance merits. It would be foreign to our present purpose to discuss the Christian faith. We seek to show why the Bible is a classic of literature, permanently enjoyable and permanently helpful; why a distinguished agnostic like Huxley would call it "the Magna Charta of the poor and the oppressed."

## § 1

### THE ISRAELITES

Who were the people who made the Old Testament, and whence came their religious genius? The beginning of Egyptian history, so far as our present knowledge goes, can be placed about 5000 B.C. Two thousand years later there were in Babylonia and Egypt two empires, already highly civilised, well organised, and powerful. For some time a race called the Sumerians held the country of the Euphrates. They ceased to be dominant and their place was taken by Semites. To the Semitic stock the nomad tribes of desert Arabia belonged. Possibly there was some Semitic blood also among the people of Egypt; but the differences which separate Babylonian and Egyptian art, letters, and thought point to fundamental differences of racial origin. Between the empires of the Euphrates and the Nile there lay the Arabian desert and a small stretch of fertile country near the Mediterranean, anciently called Canaan, which we now know as Palestine. The Canaanites, who inhabited the land, were also Semites; and at a remote date Babylonian influence over Canaan was dominant. Then there came a time when Egypt expanded her borders and conquered Canaan. Some famous letters discovered in 1887 at Tell-el-Amarna belong approximately to the period 1400–1370 B.C.[1] From them we learn that Canaan at that time had been an elaborately organised province, paying taxes to Egypt; but that all was falling into disorder

[1] These letters, for the most part, are in the Assyrian language, and written in cuneiform characters. They were addressed to the Egyptian kings Amenhotep III and IV; and were found in the tomb of a secretary to those monarchs. The tomb is near the Nile, about 180 miles south of Memphis.



*Photo : W. A. Mansell & Co.*

"THE SCAPEGOAT," BY W. HOLMAN HUNT.

this picture the artist has painted the desert from which the Hebrews originally came. He depicts the "purple crags of Moab and the pale ashes of Gomorrah."

because Egypt's power was waning. About the year 1230 B.C. "certain clans of a nomad race known as Hebrews, on whom some of the Pharaohs had imposed forced labour, broke away from Egypt under the leadership of Moses, and returned to their nomadic life in the oases of the desert south of Palestine." These clans, whom we also know as the children of Israel, were Semites, closely akin in language and customs to the Canaanites and to many tribes of the Arabian desert. They were probably but small; it may even be that the men in them did not number more than a few thousands.[1] They lived for a generation in the wilderness and then set out to conquer the fertile country of Canaan. Their task was made possible by the fact that Egyptian rule over Canaan was at an end. But, though they established themselves firmly in the hilly country, the Canaanites continued to hold the plains. A long period of war and disorder only ceased when, under the Israelite king David, Canaanites and Israelites were fused into one people. After the year 1000 B.C. Hebrew culture, and especially Hebrew religion, were nominally dominant.

About the same time that the Hebrews entered Canaan, the Philistines seem to have conquered the maritime plain near Gaza. These Philistines were not Semites but Aryan seafarers. Probably they came from the coast of Asia Minor near Crete, that centre of an early and wonderful civilisation revealed by the discoveries of Sir Arthur Evans. Old Testament history shows plainly that David used the Philistines in establishing his kingdom; and archæologists hold that through Philistine influence "a remnant of the dying glories of Crete" contributed to the progress of Hebrew culture.

Whence did the Hebrews get their religion, and what was its original character? The questions are difficult to answer. Renan asserted that the Semite of the desert,

[1] It is always necessary to be cautious in accepting numbers given in ancient documents. Errors, due to carelessness of copyists and other causes, are very likely to arise. Professor Flinders Petrie has examined the census lists of the Israelite tribes given in the Book of Numbers, chapters i. and xxvi. He makes the ingenious suggestion that *alaf* has two meanings, a "thousand" and "a group"; and therefore, when we have the figure 32,200, it originally meant 32 tents containing 200 people. He thus reaches the conclusion that the numbers of Israelites in the two lists are respectively 5500 and 5730.

" living where nature is so uniform, must be a monotheist." But there is no evidence for this theory; and all other Semites, when they reached countries like Syria and the Euphrates valley where nature is luxuriant, quickly developed an elaborate and sometimes gross polytheism. We must accept the Biblical tradition that in the wilderness, from Moses, the Hebrews received the germ of that moral monotheism which has been of incalculable value to mankind. Moses must have been supremely great, a natural leader of men and a religious genius. His mind must have been creative, his character austere, his religious insight profound. As the Hebrew prophets, from Elijah in the ninth century onwards, developed Hebrew monotheism, they believed themselves to be the true heirs of the Mosaic tradition. Their strength lay in their conviction that they were fighting to preserve the best elements of Israelite culture from contamination by ideas and practices of Canaanite origin.

It cannot be held that Moses had derived his religion from Egypt. The Egyptians practised circumcision; but Moses, and those of his followers who were born in the wilderness, were uncircumcised. Further, the prophets believed that they were true to the teaching of Moses in proclaiming that Jehovah was God of the whole earth; and most certainly there is no echo in the Ten Commandments of the many gods of Egyptian polytheism. Nowhere does the difference between Egyptian and Israelite religion appear more markedly than in connection with the doctrine of a future life. Neither in the teaching of Moses, nor in that of any great Hebrew prophet before the year 600 B.C., is there mention of a life after death or of judgment to come; but Egyptian religion is dominated by such beliefs. In fact, the originality of Moses, the independence of his religious insight, his direct inspiration, appear unchallengeable. When the Jews in later ages appealed to the authority of Moses, they rightly claimed that Moses was the source of the faith that made the Jewish nation.

Professor Kennett believes that monogamy was an element in the ethical system of Moses. " There is not a hint, in any of the prophets to suggest that they approved of

polygamy, and there are several passages that imply monogamy. Here, again, it is probable that the prophets' ideas about marriage belong to the general tradition of the teaching of Moses."

The earlier books of the Bible result from so many combinations and alterations at different times that it is hard to form a definite opinion as to this and many other questions. For instance, we find it difficult to show conclusively that Moses was a monotheist. The first commandment, "I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have none other gods but me," proves that the Hebrews were to worship Jehovah and Him alone. But was He merely the God of the Hebrews, just as other nations had their tribal gods; or was He the one and only God of the whole earth? Probably Moses, like the great prophets in subsequent centuries, held the latter view; but popular opinion, after the fusion of the Israelite and Canaanite races, thought it natural that different peoples should have different gods. So, apparently without offending public opinion, Solomon built "an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the mount that is before Jerusalem," together with other altars to heathen deities. Alike in this action and in his polygamy we see popular Canaanite custom struggling successfully against the higher Israelite ideal. So far from being surprised at this uprising we remain amazed that it was not permanently successful. The census statistics of David and Rehoboam indicate that the population of the early monarchy was 1,300,000. A few thousand Israelites of the Exodus could not possibly have increased to such a number in a couple of centuries. The people over whom David ruled must have been largely of non-Israelite origin; and the Bible records tell us explicitly that in his army foreigners were numerous. In fact, "the numbers of Israel were enlarged by accretion." May we not deem it "providential" that Hebrew religion in Palestine did not suffer the same sort of corruption as the religion which the Aryan invaders brought into ancient India?

To understand the Hebrew prophets and their fierce indignation against Canaanite worship we must bear in mind that with such worship was associated the religious

immorality which disgraces Southern Indian temples at the present day. They were fired by a moral indignation against cruelty and lust. The Canaanites and Phœnicians spoke practically the same language as the Hebrews: all were Semites. "Hannibal is just 'the grace of Baal.' Put Jah (Jehovah) for Baal, and you have the Hebrew Hananiah; or, reverse the word, and you have Johanan, the Greek Ioannes and our John." But Phœnicians and Carthaginians had no ethical or religious message for mankind. The practice of human sacrifice was in earlier times not unknown among either them or the Canaanites; and in their temples obscene idols and religious prostitution went together. Had Carthage conquered Rome it would have been a curse to human civilisation. That Christianity conquered the Roman Empire was a blessing to mankind. The difference between the blessing and the curse measures the importance of the work of the Hebrew prophets. The Old Testament, read aright, is the story of their work and its outcome.

§ 2

### THE BEGINNING OF THE BIBLE: THE LAW

To read the Old Testament aright we must know when, and by whom, its books were written. The first part of the Old Testament to be regarded as peculiarly sacred and inspired was "The Law," the first five books of the Bible. These books, as we all know, are *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*. In our Bibles they are, in their titles, ascribed to Moses. We begin with "the first book of Moses called Genesis." The Jews, in the time of Christ, also ascribed these books to Moses; but they did not then bear our modern titles. *Genesis* was denoted merely by its first words, "In the beginning." Until a century ago the belief lasted that Moses wrote practically the whole Pentateuch. There is now an almost complete agreement among scholars that it took its present form after the Exile of the Jews and before the return of Ezra, that is to say, between the years 600 B.C. and 450 B.C. The Law was probably promulgated by Ezra soon after he came to Jerusalem from Babylon, and was speedily deemed

authoritative and sacred. Moreover, modern scholars are convinced that, in the Pentateuch, there is little that goes back to the time of Moses. It is, in its present form, the result of a series of religious reformations; and the whole framework was constructed by a school of Priestly writers in Babylonia during the Exile.

These views differ so widely from those which were formerly accepted that many who have not weighed the evidence regard them as fanciful. The whole of the evidence can only be marshalled in an elaborate treatise; but a single important illustration may show its strength. Under the final system described in the Book of Leviticus all religious worship was concentrated at Jerusalem. There were no local altars or shrines where sacrifices could be offered to God. "If Moses had left such a system as a public code specially entrusted to the priests and leaders of the nation, that code must have influenced at least the *élite* of Israel." But the prophets before the Captivity know nothing of it. Even when Solomon built the Temple at Jerusalem, he did not conform to the law of Leviticus. The two brazen pillars which stood at the porch would have been forbidden by that law, for they were pagan emblems common in Canaanite and Phœnician religion. For centuries also the keepers of the sanctuary were uncircumcised foreigners and not "sons of Levi," as the law ordained. There is, in short, overwhelming proof that before the Exile the law of Leviticus was not merely disregarded: it was unknown.

When such a result has been reached, the way is open for a right understanding of the Pentateuch. This understanding has been reached by an elaborate study of the literary styles of the various writers and groups of writers whose work survives; by paying attention to the use of critical words, such as those for "God"; by investigating the development of religious ritual and thought; and by minute antiquarian research. A language changes as the centuries go by: we cannot write like Swift or Addison, nor could they write like Shakespeare, nor Shakespeare like Chaucer. Of course, there is always some uncertainty in literary analysis; but the main outlines of the following sketch may be accepted with a large measure of confidence.

Probably that part of the Old Testament which has the closest connection with Moses is the *Book of the Covenant*, preserved in Exodus, chapters xx.–xxiii. It contains, besides the Ten Commandments, "a few simple rules for worship, allowing freedom to meet God at many altars and giving no direction as to who shall perform the priestly service." There are also simple civil laws, in which justice and kindness are happily combined.

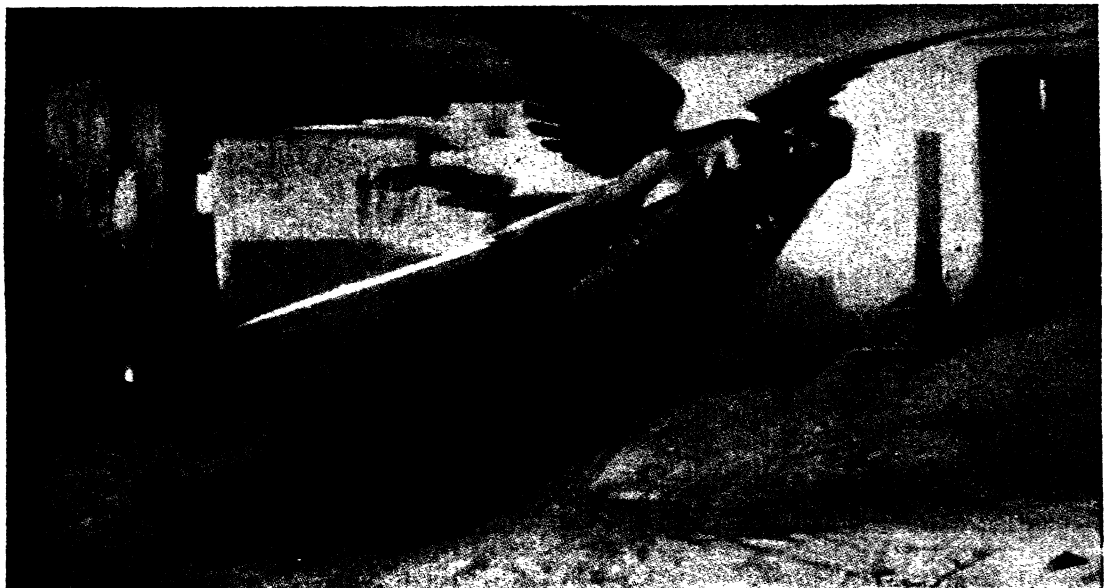
A large part of the more interesting material in the Book of Genesis is due to two writers, whom scholars call J and E. These symbols stand for "*Judæan*" and "*Ephraimite*" respectively, and mean that they belonged to south and north Israel. J probably flourished about the middle of the ninth century B.C., and E somewhat less than a century later. "Of all Hebrew historians J is the most gifted and the most brilliant. He excels in the power of delineating life and character. In ease and grace his narratives are unsurpassed. He writes without effort, and without conscious art." To him we owe the story of Eden and the Fall, of Abraham's pleading for Sodom, of the wooing of Rebekah. E does not write so brilliantly as J. He has not the same felicity of expression or poetic vigour. To him is due the history of Joseph in Egypt. But the story of the selling of Joseph with its many inconsistencies is the result of a somewhat artless combination of narratives of J and E, which differed in that each assigned the blame of the transaction to ancestors of the other. The story of the Flood is similarly full of inconsistencies. Its present form results from combining a story of J with material due to a *group of writers whom scholars call P.* These men supplied the whole framework of the Pentateuch, and gave it its final form. They were priests, living in Babylonia during the Exile; conscientious, prosaic annalists. They describe with relish the different ceremonial institutions of the Hebrews. They take a consistent pleasure in chronological and other statistical data. Whenever we come across a passage beginning "These are the generations of . . .," we may safely assume that it is the handiwork of P.

One of the Priestly writers was the author of the opening chapter of the Bible, where his style is unmistakable.

There is a second and not wholly consistent account of Creation given in Genesis, chapter ii. (vv. 4–7). This is due to J, and so is some three centuries older than P's narrative. The first Creation story probably reflects the influence of Babylonian scientific speculation. Though the progressive development of modern science has rendered it obsolete, it is worthy of our respect, and its noble monotheistic setting is of enduring value.

In thus describing the work of P, we have passed over an earlier writer to whom the most valuable part of the Pentateuch is due. This is *D, the author of the great sermon ascribed to Moses which makes the book Deuteronomy.* J and E may be regarded as forerunners of the first succession of prophets, Amos, Hosea, and Micah. D is, in language and thought, closely allied to Jeremiah; and he must have lived about the year 650 B.C. His work was almost certainly the book discovered "in the house of God by Hilkiah in the year 621 B.C.," which served as a basis for the reformation of Jewish religion under King Josiah. Written very likely when the heathen reaction under King Manasseh seemed finally to have destroyed the fine religious tradition which went back to Moses, Deuteronomy shows rich and true spiritual insight. Ritual, indeed, has developed since the Book of the Covenant; but formalism has not quenched the fire of the spirit. We must not assume that D, in writing his book, created legislation unheard of before. He probably gathered together what he regarded as the best developments of the past, combined them with exhortations due to his own religious fervour, and then passed away leaving his book as a legacy to a happier time. Christians will never forget that from it comes the first half of the Golden Rule. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Alongside the Book of Deuteronomy we may put an ancient document embedded in the Book of Leviticus, chapters xvii.–xxvi. This is called by scholars the *Law of Holiness.* It has been altered by the Priestly editors of the Pentateuch, but there are many indications which point to the influence of the prophet Ezekiel. It resembles the Book of the Covenant in that the laws in it are in the main



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AND THERE WAS A GREAT CRY IN EGYPT," BY ARTHUR HACKER, A.R.A.

In the Feast of the Passover the Jews still commemorate the death of the first-born which preceded their exodus from Egypt.

addressed to the people, not to the priest. Its religious inspiration is magnificent. In it we find the second half of the Golden Rule, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Throughout the ages mystics have felt the appeal of its words, "And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people"; and the mission of Israel to humanity was never more finely expressed than in the sentence, "And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples that ye should be mine."

For the convenience of readers we give a short table to show the main sources from which the Pentateuch was constructed.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Book of the Covenant | Simple civil and religious laws of great antiquity. | Origin probably with Moses about 1200 B.C. |
| J . . . | An historian of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. | About 850 B.C. |
| E . . . | An historian of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. | About 780 B.C. |
| D . . . | The writer who inspired the reformation under King Josiah and to whom the Book of Deuteronomy is due. | About 650 B.C. |
| Law of Holiness | A code of ritual and civil law of great religious value, probably compiled by a friend or follower of Ezekiel. | About 570 B.C. |
| P . . . | The school of writers in Babylonia who finally gave the Pentateuch its present form. | Between 550 and 450 B.C. |

## § 3

### THE GROWTH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Hebrew Bible began with "*The Law.*" To understand its further growth we must recognise that the order of the Old Testament books in our Bibles is not that which a strict Jew in the time of Christ would have deemed satisfactory. We shall later mention some of the great translations of the Hebrew scriptures into foreign languages. It is sufficient now to say that the standard Jewish translation into Greek is called the Septuagint; and the standard Christian translation into Latin, the Vulgate. Roughly speaking, the order of the books of the Old Testament in English Bibles is that of the Vulgate. This order in turn was derived from the Septuagint, the authors of which apparently tried to group the books according to their subject-matter. They thus obscured a distinction between two groups of books which in the time of Christ was of real importance. They mixed up the group known as "*The Prophets*" with the group called "*The Writings.*"

"The Prophets" was the Jewish description of the following group of books:

| | |
|---|---|
| Joshua | Jeremiah |
| Judges | Ezekiel |
| Samuel 1 and 2 | Isaiah |
| Kings 1 and 2 | Twelve Minor Prophets |

It thus contained, according to Jewish reckoning, eight books. We have to remember that these "books" were written on rolls of parchment or papyrus; eight such rolls of fairly convenient size made up "The Prophets," just as five rolls made up "The Law."

"The Writings" was the description of the group formed by the remaining books in the English Old Testament, namely:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ruth | Lamentations |
| Psalms | Daniel |
| Job | Esther |
| Proverbs | Ezra and Nehemiah |
| Ecclesiastes | Chronicles 1 and 2 |
| Song of Solomon | |

This group thus contained eleven " books " ; and the total number of books of the Hebrew Bible was thus twenty-four.

It seems at first sight mere pedantry to spend time in separating " The Prophets " from " The Writings." But in the time of Christ " The Writings " had not won the same sort of recognition as was given to the Law and the Prophets. *They could not be read as Scripture at the Synagogue services.* They were on trial, as it were, slowly establishing a claim to be regarded as equally sacred and inspired. When Christ said, " Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets," He implied that the one command summed up the whole of Bible teaching. For such teaching it was not necessary to go to " The Writings."

## § 4

### THE PROPHETS

Eight, or according to our reckoning twenty-one, books made up the group called " The Prophets." When were they first regarded as Scripture? The process was, no doubt, gradual. Pious Jews, who venerated the Law, found in the Prophets spiritual inspiration which deepened the religious meaning of the Temple ritual which the Law had established. The Law was primarily ecclesiastical; but religious men are seldom satisfied solely by an ecclesiastical system. They demand the witness of history to God, records of personal faith and the fire of prophetic enthusiasm. Whenever religion is earnest, the Prophet takes his place by the side of the Priest. So, gradually but irresistibly, " the Prophets " supplemented " the Law." Probably during the third century B.C. a lesson from the one group of books was added to a lesson from the other in the synagogue services, just as in Christian churches a lesson from the New Testament follows a lesson from the Old. By 250 B.C. the Prophets seem to have become Scripture. Henceforth the history and preaching of the men who had kept inviolate all that was best in the faith of Moses, who during centuries of struggle had developed the finest monotheism the world has known—such history and preaching were sacred.

There is confusion in the varied literature which makes up "The Prophets." The books of *Joshua*, *Judges*, *Samuel*, and *Kings* narrate the history of the Israelites from the Exodus to the Exile, and the earlier part of this history is of doubtful value. The fact is not surprising. During the Exile valuable documents were lost. Rolls wore out. Fragments of history and prophecy of different ages were gathered together into new rolls. The process of combination, of revision, and of more or less drastic "editing," which produced the Pentateuch, also affected the Historical and Prophetical books. We naturally regret that so much of the earlier history of Israel which is presented in the Bible is "ideal" history, written from the standpoint of a much later age. Yet what has been lost is relatively unimportant, because fortunately the story of the bitter struggle and ultimate triumph of the prophets is, in its main outlines, clear.

The mists of the dawn of Hebrew history almost entirely shut out Moses from our sight. These mists are still thick three hundred years later, when Elijah appears upon the scene. At that time, early in the ninth century B.C., the struggle between Canaanite superstition and Israelite religion was at its fiercest. The Baal worship of the Canaanites was supported by the prestige of Phœnician power; but Elijah won the victory. He established the principles that Jehovah alone was God in Israel, that Jehovah was righteous and demanded righteousness from His people. The narratives of Elijah and Elisha have been incorporated in the Book of Kings from a very early source. They are of Northern Israelitish origin, "and exhibit the ease, grace, and vividness which belong to the best style of Hebrew historical literature." But they are dramatic history of the type which preserves the spirit of a great adventure; and not till we come to Amos do we get teaching authenticated by the very words of the prophet himself.

In the year 760 B.C. when *Amos* flourished, the centre of Hebrew national life was not in the petty state of Judah but in the powerful Northern Kingdom. To Amos, as to many another, it was plain that this kingdom, together with all the surrounding nations, was in danger of being overwhelmed by Assyria. As he mused over the situation

he saw that, if Jehovah was Creator, then every movement of history was Jehovah's work. The Assyrian would be the instrument of divine punishment on all who broke the laws of universal morality. And especially, since Israel had known Jehovah, she must seek Him if she was to live. Yet her service must not be through ritual and sacrifice. "I hate, I despise your feast days: I take no pleasure in your solemn assemblies." "Let justice flow like waters and righteousness as an unfailing stream." The prophet's message is as fresh, as much needed, now as when it was written. A religion of priests and prosperous people who condone injustice, sensuality, and harshness to the poor is worthless. They who find comfort in it "shall go into captivity with the first that go captive." Jehovah will judge according to righteousness, and especially strict will be His judgment of His own people.

> The virgin of Israel is fallen, she cannot rise again.
> She is cast down upon her land, there is none to raise her up.

Before the downfall thus predicted had come to pass, *Hosea* appeared. He was the last prophet of the Northern Kingdom, tragically isolated in a corrupt society whose ruin he foresaw. His temperament was that of a poet. He was sensitive, with a passionate religious earnestness. He insists that Jehovah loves His people with the undying love that a husband can retain for a faithless wife. God must punish, but punishment will not be the end. Love, though outraged, is always eager to forgive. Indifferent to the prophet's message, the nobles of Samaria went to their doom. In 722 B.C. the Northern Kingdom perished. Thenceforth in the small kingdom of Judah, little more than the fortress city of Jerusalem with its dependent countryside, the spirit of Hebrew monotheism was preserved.

First *Micah*, "the prophet of the poor," came forward to denounce the injustice of men in power, sternly to protest against abuses condoned by a corrupt priesthood and false prophets. Because of such evils "Zion shall be ploughed as a field and the temple-mountain shall be as the high places of the forest." And then *Isaiah* appears on the scene. The "call," which he describes with such restrained

power in chapter vi. of the *Book of Isaiah*, probably took place in the year 740 B.C., while Hosea and Micah were still active. Afterwards for forty years he sought to guide his countrymen. He was alike a prophet and a statesman, idealist, reformer, and shrewd judge of political issues. The range and quality of his influence may be measured by the extent of the literature gathered under his name. Of the Book of Isaiah the last twenty-seven chapters are a compilation of which the earliest portions are a century and a half later than the time of the Prophet. Even in the first thirty-nine chapters there is much material not due to him. But Isaiah began a great movement which profoundly affected the national life of Judah. We may compare with it the Evangelical movement of Wesley and his friends in England in the eighteenth century. Just as their preaching gave to the English people spiritual tenacity which carried the country safely through the Napoleonic wars, so the religious confidence which Isaiah created lasted until the Jews returned from the Exile. Upon the basis of Isaiah's evangelicalism developments of institutional religion were reared. But just as there would have been no Oxford Movement had the Evangelical Revival never taken place, so the Deuteronomic reform and the later Levitical Code were possible because Isaiah had taught men to hear the Divine voice asking, "Whom shall we send?" and to give the answer, "Here am I, send me."

After Isaiah had passed away there came a heathen reaction under Manasseh, who ruled as a vassal of Assyria for half a century until the year 641 B.C. Fifteen years after his death *Jeremiah* received his call. His priestly ancestry, no doubt, made him more sympathetic than the earlier prophets to popular sacrificial worship. Perhaps, too, he saw that it was necessary to accept and reform such worship if the prophetic tradition was to survive. At any rate he associated himself with the Deuteronomic reform, wherein priest and prophet made an alliance discreditable to neither. Yet plainly with that reform he was not wholly content. Quite explicitly he rejects the idea that ritual is of value in itself. He was a mystic, who all around him saw signs of God's presence and power. In his writings for the first time in the Old Testament "we find frequent, intimate

prayer." He taught that such communion with God removed religion from the domain of national pride. Inevitably the fierce patriots of his troubled age denounced him as a traitor. In his writings Jeremiah offers us perhaps the finest example in the Old Testament of a character disciplined and strengthened by suffering. He and his people needed all the fortitude, all the consolations of religion, which such an understanding as he had won could give them. Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C. and Jeremiah was made prisoner. When last we hear of him, he was being taken against his will by Jewish fugitives to Egypt.

Some eleven years before the fall of Jerusalem *Ezekiel* had been carried away to Babylon; and there for a quarter of a century he dreamed and planned and preached. The Deuteronomic reform had failed: Ezekiel laid the foundations of a more stringent ecclesiastical system. Jerusalem was in ruins: Ezekiel, confident that the exiles would return, planned the theocratic state which arose to justify his vision. He, more than any other single man, made the Law, the Levitical Code which gave and still gives such marvellous coherence to the Jewish people. The enduring quality of his work testifies to his greatness. He had great literary gifts: his description of the magnificence of Tyre is a splendid piece of writing. His rich imaginative power is shown repeatedly, especially in the vision of the glory of God with which the Book of Ezekiel opens and in the picture of the resurrection in "the valley of dry bones." He quite rightly emphasises the importance of personal religion and the value of what a modern clergyman would term pastoral care. But, while Jeremiah was a mystic seeking personal communion with God, Ezekiel teaches the supremacy of Divine law. While Amos and Hosea were puritans, Ezekiel is a ritualist. And his ritual was the old Canaanite custom of animal sacrifices, strange and abhorrent to us now. It is true that he spiritualises the meaning of such rites, by developing the theology of propitiation which was afterwards to have its place in Christian doctrine. But, great as was his conception of the ordered Church transforming the world, yet the voices of those who cry in the wilderness, and recklessly find the peace of God amid strife and ruin, have done more for humanity. Ezekiel

must have had rare prophetic gifts or he would not have been so distinguished a priest. Perhaps he was the greatest priest in history.

Let us pass from him to another exile by the waters of Babylon who lived a generation later, the unknown writer whom scholars call the *Second Isaiah*. In the middle of the Book of Isaiah, at the fortieth chapter, we hear his voice for the first time, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." Thereafter there comes, with lyrical splendour unmatched in religious literature, a message of consolation for Israel. The beauty of the language tends to hide from us the almost painful intensity of the writer's thought. But in no Old Testament writer do we find a more august picture of the majesty of God. To the Second Isaiah God is both Creator and Ruler of the world. Nations and their kings are the instruments of His purpose. Yet He is also patient and loving, not only to Israel but to all the nations upon earth. And Israel shall be His servant, suffering that the world may be redeemed. Nowhere else in Hebrew literature is there any parallel to this profound understanding. The Second Isaiah discovered the secret of the redemptive power of innocent suffering: more than five centuries before Calvary he revealed the significance of the Cross. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Here are combined unrivalled religious insight and matchless beauty of language; and of the writer we know nothing, save that he lived when Cyrus the Persian destroyed the Babylonian Empire.

In the Old Testament there are altogether twelve *Minor Prophets*. The work of the three earliest we have described. It is sufficient to say that in the rest we find a considerable amount of material later than the death of Alexander the Great (323 B.C.). But the *Book of Jonah* deserves special mention. It is not history but prophetic allegory. The

writer, whom very uncertainly we may date about the year 300 B.C., took an old prophetic legend, and made it the vehicle of some of the finest ethical teaching in the Old Testament. The Second Isaiah had proclaimed that Israel was disciplined by suffering that she might spread to all humanity her knowledge of God. But later Judaism too often showed itself narrow and fiercely patriotic. Against national intolerance the Book of Jonah is a splendid and powerful protest. The prophet, who typifies Israel, is sent by God to preach repentance even to Nineveh, the great capital of his country's enemies. He tries to escape this unpleasant duty, but in vain. When finally he obeys the Divine command, Nineveh repents and God forgives. Jonah, sullen and angry, upbraids God for His mercy. And God answers, " Should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand little children and also much cattle ? " Both those who profess literal belief in the miracle of Jonah's whale and those who deride their credulity usually ignore the lesson of this beautiful allegory. Modern nations at war, like fanatical Jews of old, resent such teaching. But the Book of Jonah has well been called the Holy of Holies of the Old Testament.

## § 5

### THE WRITINGS

The third division of the Hebrew Old Testament consists, as we have seen, of eleven or, according to our reckoning, thirteen books. Though they may contain some early material they were for the most part written late in Jewish history, probably within the two centuries which ended with the year 140 B.C. At that date the Jews, under the Maccabean princes, had just regained their independence. We can imagine the thrill of exultation which then went through the people. They were once again a free nation. They awoke to the fact that, outside the Law and the Prophets, they had a national literature, a valuable record of national tenacity during the era of subjection. There was an irresistible impulse to gather together the finest works in this literature, to make a collection of poetry,

drama, philosophy, and late history which should supplement the earlier Scriptures. So " The Writings " were gradually collected and gradually regarded as inspired. Such scanty evidence as we possess points to the fact that about a century before the birth of Christ this process was virtually completed. But even in Christ's day Jewish teachers did not regard " The Writings " as on a level with the Law and the Prophets. In particular the sacred character of four books, the Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Esther, and Chronicles, was long disputed. But at a conference at Jamnia, about A.D. 100, Jewish rabbis appear to have reached agreement. Thenceforth, as scholars say, the canon of the Hebrew Old Testament was closed. The leaders of the Jewish Church ratified a popular verdict; but the strange arguments by which some justified their action may be taken to show the hesitation which they felt. From three of the four disputed books there is no quotation in the New Testament. To Chronicles alone is there a reference; and this reference shows that it was regarded, when Jesus taught, as the last of the books deemed inspired.

By far the greatest of all the works in " The Writings " is the *Book of Psalms*. Sometimes, indeed, it gives its name to the whole collection. It is a hymn-book, the finest hymn-book ever made. Some of the hymns in it are ancient; a few may even go back to the time of David. But most were written after the Exile and some probably belong to Maccabean times. The hymn-book was compiled for use at the Temple in Jerusalem. Naturally, however, it passed into use at the synagogue services and thus had a profound influence on the faith of the Jewish people in the time of Christ. Anyone who examines the teaching of Jesus, as it is recorded in St. Mark, the earliest of the Gospels, will notice how frequently He quotes the Psalms. Christians in all ages have shared His love of these glorious hymns. Some few are vindictive and so alien from His temper. A few others we may deem prosaic. But the large majority are extraordinarily beautiful, alike in thought and expression. They are pure poetry, whereas too many modern hymns merely deserve to be described as religious verse. Especially splendid are the Pilgrim Songs (Ps. cxx.–cxxxiv.) which were sung by Jews coming to the Great

Feasts as they ascended Mount Zion. We do not get in the Psalms, and we should hardly expect to find, any advance on the religious teaching of the great prophets. There is, for example, in the Psalter no doctrine of Eternal Life. The idea that prosperity is the reward of righteousness is common. The theology of this great hymn-book is, in fact, conventional. But faith and hope abound. Religious joy and spiritual confidence, trust in God and thankfulness for His mercies, find repeated expression in language which is a pure delight. No religious poetry that has yet been written can be ranked above these Jewish hymns.

Among "The Writings" there are two other poetical works. *Lamentations* consists of five dirges, highly artificial in structure. Possibly the second and fourth were written by some man who had actually seen the horrors of the capture of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., while the remainder are of later date. Even in the English version we seem to find studied elaboration rather than passion evoked by overwhelming tragedy; and few will contradict the verdict that the book is not supremely great either in its religious insight or as a work of art. The *Song of Songs*, as we have already seen, was classed as Scripture only after much hesitation. Its right to a place in the Bible was defended on the ground that Solomon was its author, and that, symbolically, it represented Jehovah's love for his people. Neither contention can be justified. Its language shows that, in its present form, it cannot be earlier than the third century B.C. It does not mention Jehovah; it is in no sense a religious work. Some believe it to be a disordered dramatic idyll; but more probably, it is a collection of unconnected love-lyrics such as were sung at Jewish wedding-feasts. Their beauty, their sensuous passion, is undeniable. We do not wonder that Goethe praised them highly. They are voluptuous without being coarse. There is in them, moreover, a sensitive delight in nature which is rare in Hebrew literature. It is good that the Song of Songs should be in the Bible if only to remind us that, to the men who made the Old Testament as to ourselves, human love and spring-time were two of God's rich gifts.

From poetry we pass naturally to idyllic narrative and drama. Of each of these forms of art we have one example



*From the picture in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. Reproduced by permission of the Liverpool Corporation.*

"RUTH AND NAOMI," BY P. H. CALDERON.

**The story of Ruth is the most beautiful idyll in the Old Testament.**

in "The Writings." The *Book of Ruth* is exquisite in its simplicity and grace: Goethe described it as the loveliest little idyll that tradition has handed down to us. The story moves forward easily and naturally; it is filled with the spirit of kindliness. When it was written we cannot tell: some good scholars believe it to be a very early example of Hebrew literary art. Early or late, it deserves to be immortal. Contrast with the fierce nationalism of Esther the words of Ruth the Moabitess to the Israelite widow: "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." With such affection the daughter of Moab came to Bethlehem. Half the world now turns with like love to that Judæan village.

The *Book of Job* is a great drama, of which the theme is the problem of human suffering. It presents many conundrums to commentators, among whom there is much disagreement. But apparently an early popular story was used as a basis of the drama; and, after the first draft was completed, large additions and alterations were made by other writers. Consequently it is unequal, alike in descriptive power and in cogency of thought. The book mirrors the perplexity of Jewish thinkers during the period of Greek domination. It belongs to what is called the Wisdom-Literature of the Jews. Roughly speaking, this literature is Jewish speculative philosophy: in it an attempt is made to understand God's nature by an intellectual inquiry into the problems of human life. In Job no satisfactory reason is given for the suffering of the righteous. When the Lord answers out of the whirlwind He merely bids Job consider the inexplicable majesty of His creative power, manifest everywhere. St. Paul was doubtless recalling this reverent agnosticism when he wrote, "How unsearchable are God's judgments, and His ways past finding out."

Though the agnosticism of the Book of Job is profoundly reverent, there are in the Old Testament two other wisdom-books where faith has plainly degenerated. In *Proverbs* a shrewd worldly morality is mixed with finer material; in the greater part of *Ecclesiastes* sceptical pessimism is dominant. Neither book in its present form can be much

earlier than the year 250 B.C. The *Book of Proverbs* undoubtedly is highly composite in character. It contains three main divisions, of which the finest and latest is to be found in the first nine chapters of the book. The climax of this "Praise of Wisdom" magnificently describes Wisdom as with God from the beginning. "When He prepared the heavens I was there. When He appointed the foundations of the earth I was by Him."

We feel no surprise that *Ecclesiastes* was only admitted to the Old Testament after prolonged hesitation. Its triumph bears witness to the wide liberality of later Jewish thought. We can best understand its apparent inconsistencies if we think of it as a record of the free discussion of academic theologians. It is often terribly gloomy, but the last chapter is superb in its English dress. "Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it"—the pure music of such sentences is perfect.

There remain for our consideration four works—Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, Daniel, and Esther. *Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah* really form a single continuous narrative, and it is generally assumed that all were produced by the same compiler. He probably lived during the third century B.C. A comparison with the Books of Kings, which he used as one of the main sources of his work, shows that as a historian he is untrustworthy. For this reason, probably, the Book of Chronicles with difficulty secured a place among "The Writings." Ezra and Nehemiah were accepted more readily as there was no book in the historical section of "The Prophets" which dealt with the same period of history. Yet it is certain that, as historical records of the return from the Exile, these works, though interesting, are faulty. Speaking briefly, Chronicles is Kings rewritten by a strict Jewish Churchman: it is history falsified that it may be made edifying. In the supposed interests of piety truth has been sacrificed. Other ages can offer worse examples of ecclesiastical historians who were convinced that truth could be usefully perverted for the greater glory of God.

The *Book of Daniel* was written within the period 165–163 B.C. to encourage the Jews during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. The success of the Maccabean revolt, to which it doubtless gave powerful aid, won for it widespread popularity. Though it is probably the latest book in the Old Testament it was speedily included among "The Writings"; and in the time of Christ it was as well known as is *Pilgrim's Progress* to ourselves. It is the only example in the Old Testament of what is called Apocalyptic literature. In the New Testament the Book of Revelation is a work of the same type; and a number of other similar works are known to scholars. In all of them we find veiled predictions, usually relating to the outcome of events in the writer's own time, combined with fantastic and sometimes magnificent imagery. Often these works, by a literary fiction which deceived nobody, were assigned to some worthy of the past—a Daniel, a Moses, an Enoch. The writers of them sought to give a religious interpretation of history and to express their faith in the ultimate triumph of righteousness. Only by a violent effort of the imagination can we understand them aright, for they belong to a form of art and to modes of thought which have passed away. The Book of Daniel is a great work, for its stories still inspire and its grandeur still attracts men, though too often they profoundly misconceive its character.

The *Book of Esther* is an elaborate and skilfully written story which appealed to Jewish national pride. It is useful to have it in the Old Testament if only to indicate the sort of narrative which was popular in the time of Christ. It is alien from His spirit; and all Christians will sympathise with the reluctance of the Rabbis to class it among their sacred books.

## § 6

### THE APOCRYPHA

In some English Bibles, placed between the Old and New Testaments, there are fourteen books or fragments of books, which bear the title "Apocrypha." Roughly speaking, these books were accepted by Jews of Alexandria as part of the Bible, but rejected by Jews of Palestine. All but

three of them are regarded as "inspired" by the Roman Church. The Reformed Churches give them a less honourable place. In the Church of England passages from the Apocrypha are read "for example of life and instruction of manners"; they are not to be applied "to establish any doctrine."

Some of these books and fragments are not worthy of a place in the Bible. The stories of *Susanna* and of *Bel and the Dragon* are poor stuff. *Judith* is a horrible tale in which a woman treacherously uses her beauty to murder the general of an invading army. The *Second Book of Maccabees* is history decked with fantastic legends. The *First Book of Esdras* is of even less historical value than Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. The best-known passage in it is the story of the three guardsmen who disputed as to what was the strongest thing in the world. "The first wrote, Wine is the strongest. The second wrote, The King is the strongest. The third wrote, Women are the strongest; but, above all things, Truth beareth away the victory." At the end "all the people shouted and said, Great is Truth, and mighty above all things." The verdict has passed into popular speech in its Latin dress, *Magna est veritas et prævalet.* The *Book of Tobit* is a romance which in the later Middle Ages was very popular; but, though it contains some fine moral lessons, it has more than a faint flavour of the *Arabian Nights.*

Yet in the Apocrypha there are also works of real value. The *First Book of Maccabees* is first-rate history of the successful revolt of the Jews after their persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes. It was written about 100 B.C., when little more than half a century had passed since the events which it records. As we study this history we realise the anguish and determination which caused the Book of Daniel to be written; and we understand why that apocalypse continued to be widely and deservedly popular in the time of Christ.

The most important and most attractive work in the Apocrypha is that called *Ecclesiasticus.* Its proper title is *The Wisdom of Jesus-ben-Sirach.* It consists of shrewd reflections upon life, and gives a sort of religious philosophy of conduct of singular beauty and penetration. In some

former Christian ages it was widely read and highly esteemed: its title, which is at least as early as the third century, shows that it was regarded as in an especial degree *the* Church Book. Its author Jesus (or Joshua), the son or grandson of Sirach, was a Jew of Palestine who wrote about the year 180 B.C., some fifteen years before the Book of Daniel was written. The grandson of this Jesus revised the work and translated it into Greek when he was living in Egypt.

The more Ecclesiasticus is studied, the more it is loved. It ranks with the Book of Job as one of the two finest examples of the Wisdom-Literature of the Jews. To the author "the fountain of wisdom is the word of God most high." "There is One wise and greatly to be feared, the Lord sitting upon His throne." "All wisdom cometh from the Lord and is with Him for ever." In this spirit of austere piety Jesus-ben-Sirach surveys the life of man. He has studied books and human nature with equal zest and insight. He is free from illusions, but his freedom has not hardened into cynicism. His reflections are not always original: could any man produce an original summary of proverbial philosophy? Yet as a phrase-maker he is great. "A fool travaileth with a word, as a woman in labour with a child," is most happily turned; and more than phrase-making has gone to the sentence, "There is a sinner that hath good success in evil things; and there is a gain that turneth to loss."

One of the most attractive things about Ben-Sirach is his strong, yet truly religious, common sense. Of worship without righteousness he is as scornful as the great prophets of His race. "The sacrifice of a just man is acceptable," he says significantly. He is contemptuous of the superstitions which seem to be always with us. "Divinations and soothsayings and dreams are vain: and the heart fancieth as a woman's heart in travail." With regard to the respective values of prayer and a physician's skill in sickness, he keeps the balance true. "My son, in thy sickness be not negligent; but pray unto the Lord, and He will make thee whole. Leave off from sin, and cleanse thy heart from all wickedness. Then give place to the physician, for the Lord hath created him: let him not go from thee,

for thou hast need of him. There is a time when in their hands there is good success." Such sane teaching has lost none of its value by the lapse of time.

The best known of all the passages in Ecclesiasticus is, of course, that which begins, "Let us now praise famous men." Its use in England, whenever school or college benefactors are commemorated, has become general; and, however often we may hear the passage read, the appeal of its dignified beauty does not fail. "Their bodies are buried in peace, but their name liveth for evermore," is magnificent in its simplicity; and for sublime pathos there are few sentences in the English language which can equal the apparently unstudied words, "and some there be, which have no memorial; who are perished as though they had never been."

There is a second wisdom-book in the Apocrypha which bears the title *The Wisdom of Solomon.* Its author was a Palestinian Jew who was quite possibly a contemporary of St. Paul. He was, even more than the Apostle, under the influence of Greek religious ideas of his age. Christians at a first reading are tempted to class his work above Ecclesiasticus. They are inevitably attracted by its doctrine of the all-pervading presence and power of the Spirit of God. "Thy counsel who hath known except Thou give wisdom, and send Thy Holy Spirit from above," is a sentence which might have come from the New Testament. Christians feel also that the book contains their own doctrine of Eternal Life. "For God created man to be immortal and made him to be the image of His own eternity"—such is a belief which will last as long as Christianity endures. Yet the book is not quite first-rate. Perhaps the writer was ambitious to make it supremely beautiful and for that reason failed to produce such unstudied perfection as we find, for instance, in St. Paul's great Eulogy of Love. But at times we forget to be critical. "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die: and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction: but they are in peace." The man who could write these words of faith and hope had a true message for humanity.

There is only one other work in the Apocrypha which in our brief survey merits description. It is the *Second Book of Esdras*, which was written by a Jew after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Some Christian writer revised the work and added a preface; and the book thus edited was probably published soon after the year A.D. 120. Many Jews thought that the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple would begin the End of the Age: the calamity would prepare the way for a Messianic Kingdom of God. The influence of such ideas can be seen in the Gospels and even more explicitly in the Book of Revelation; and it is because the Second Book of Esdras has so many parallels to New Testament writings that scholars have studied it minutely. The book, in fact, helps us to understand what was the religious background of the early Christian missionaries. When the author wrote, the breach between Judaism and Christianity had not become complete. In the book there is the "larger, broader, more genial spirit of Judaism," which passed away with the triumph of Jewish legalism a generation later. Whenever Christianity has been true to the temper of its Founder, it has preserved this spirit. Because of its presence, early leaders like St. Paul and St. John freed their faith from Jewish fetters; and, by using the language and ideas of the Greek world, commended the Gospel to the Gentiles.

The Second Book of Esdras is but one among many works which have precariously survived to show the religious influences which fashioned the growth of Christianity. This literature links the Old Testament to the New. Study of it is a fascinating branch of research; but it merely confirms the fact that Christianity would never have come into existence had not men felt that Jesus, by His life and teaching, in a manner unparalleled, revealed God to the world.

## § 7

### THE NEW TESTAMENT

The books of the New Testament were written in Greek and all the writers, except possibly St. Luke, were Jews. But their Greek was not the language of Homer, or even of

Thucydides or Plato ; it was Hellenistic Greek, the popular language in which, in the first century of our era, men spoke to their friends and wrote to their wives. The literary Greek of that period was artificial, " fine writing," which tried to copy classical models of style. New Testament Greek seemed a thing apart, until quite recently family and business letters of the same age were discovered in the sand of Egypt. Then its true nature was revealed.

The New Testament writers wisely used this popular language, for they sought to spread Christianity not merely among a cultured minority, but as widely as possible. For the most part their converts came from what we should now call the lower-middle classes. To this grade of society most of Christ's intimate disciples belonged. Some, like the sons of Zebedee, were probably well-to-do ; but all of them were above the status of the slave. The early missionaries welcomed men and women of all classes. Though they used popular Greek, we must not think of them as ill-educated. St. Paul, who received a thorough theological training, seems to have been the son of a man of good position in his native city. Both St. Luke and St. John the Evangelist were men of ability and culture ; and all the other New Testament writers were able to express themselves in Greek, though it was probably in no case their native tongue.

Though the New Testament writers used a non-literary language they often reached, as our Authorised Version shows, a splendid dignity. Convinced that they had a great message, they wrote naturally and directly. St. Mark's Greek is rough ; but with great brevity he gives us a singularly vigorous and effective memoir. St. Paul dictated his letters to a secretary. We have in them unfinished sentences, involved arguments, rapid changes of thought. As we read them, Paul the preacher rises before us. As we study them, we are amazed by the fertility of his mind, its subtlety and flexibility, its creative power ; and at times he reaches levels of eloquence unsurpassed in literature. A modern scholar describes St. John's writing as " correct enough in grammar, but simple to baldness and with no sense of idiom." Yet, though he struggles in this way with a language not his own, he has produced in the Fourth

Gospel and in his First Epistle two masterpieces of religious literature. Words recur; simple detached sentences follow one another: there is no ornament; all seems "thin and abstract." We should expect complete failure; we get the purest spiritual beauty. The mystic and philosopher speaks, as it were, a child's language; yet none other has enriched so greatly man's spiritual understanding. St. Luke is the most brilliant writer in the New Testament. His ease and grace of style, his wide sympathies, his sensitiveness, make him peculiarly attractive to modern readers. His descriptive power, as we see in his account of St. Paul's shipwreck, is remarkable; and anyone who doubts his literary skill should try to rewrite the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Yet, of course, that parable came from Jesus, perhaps with little change; and the literary quality of His teaching we cannot ignore.

Even in a literary discussion of the New Testament it is quite impossible to ignore Jesus of Nazareth. His personality dominates the whole collection of books and gives it its inherent unity. His teaching as to God and Man, His death, the perfection of His character, His significance for humanity—with such matters the New Testament writers are almost exclusively concerned. When we reflect that, for the most part, these writers had not known Jesus personally, that their witness is at second-hand, we realise how firm and deep must have been the impress which Christ made on those who were with Him during His brief mission. There is, in the main outlines of the picture which we have of Him, no blurring. We know His thought, His temper, His character—in a word, His quality—as we know that of few men in history.

Probably the records of His teaching given in the Gospels are more exact than we should expect. It is true that at least thirty years passed after His death before any of the Gospels were written. But the Jews cultivated a verbal memory, whereas we trust to written records; so it may well be that even after half a century accurate fragments of His teaching were preserved. Probably Jesus was born in 6 B.C. and crucified in A.D. 29. He normally used the Aramaic dialect of Palestine; but He knew Hebrew, and probably could speak Greek. A century before His birth

the population of Galilee was largely non-Jewish: it was "Galilee of the Gentiles"; and, in Christ's lifetime, Capernaum and the adjacent towns were as much Græco-Syrian as Jewish. Near Nazareth, a town of possibly some 10,000 people, ran great high roads connecting some of the chief cities of the Levant. Thus, though Jesus came from a carpenter's cottage, His youth was not entirely remote from the great world. Yet, of course, above all He was Himself. As Professor Peake says, "No figure in history is more marked by perfect poise and mental balance, none more utterly sincere, more searching in His moral judgments, more relentless in His exposure of unreality." The quality of His teaching is shown most vividly in the great parables and in that collection of His sayings which we call the Sermon on the Mount. The sayings bear the unmistakable stamp of absolute religious genius. In them the finest moral idealism is enforced by epigram and paradox. The commands are direct, unhesitating, and sincere. A shrewd simplicity goes hand in hand with a noble certainty. To the speaker Heaven is as real as earth. He lives with God more than with men. He has a sure insight into the human heart and an equally sure understanding of the nature and purpose of God. He never hesitates, is never at a loss. His mind is amazingly fertile, quick to unify apparent contradictions. He has, if we may use the metaphor, the creative genius of a great moral and religious artist. In Him is the austere dignity which great wisdom gives. His calm authority inspires awe and respect. For the rest we will only say that He has been revered and loved as no other man in human history. So it has come to pass that the four Gospels have been printed more frequently and read more often, more intently, and more affectionately, than any books ever written.

The earliest of them is the *Gospel according to St. Mark*, which was apparently written about the time of the fall of Jerusalem, A.D. 70, though it may be some ten years older. It probably was founded on "the rough popular preaching" of St. Peter and the earliest missionaries. Its author was John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas and at intervals the companion of St. Paul. When the men who had known Jesus were passing away, St. Mark wrote down the honest,

effective, oft-told story which had been their " good-news," their Gospel. He included also an account of the last days of John the Baptist, which he probably got from some follower of that prophet ; and inserted the Little Apocalypse (chapter xiii.) in which some Christian Jew had mingled Christ's prediction of the doom of Jerusalem with his own vision of the End of the Age.

The *Gospel according to St. Luke* and the *Acts of the Apostles* are due to a single author, who in the latter half of the Acts has incorporated sections of a diary kept by one who travelled with St. Paul when he was taken as a prisoner to Rome. That the diarist was St. Luke and that he wrote both the Gospel which bears his name and the Acts is very probable. It may be that the Acts contains no account of St. Paul's martyrdom because it was written before that event ; in that case the Gospel must be dated about A.D. 60. On the other hand, many scholars believe that it was written a generation later ; and some assume that an unknown editor used St. Luke's diary. It has now been established, by ingenious and quite conclusive arguments, that both St. Luke and the author of " *the Gospel according to St. Matthew* " used Mark together with another early document, now lost. This document scholars call Q. It was a supremely important record of the teaching of Christ, which the Apostle Matthew had written. A large piece of it was incorporated wholesale in our first Gospel as the Sermon on the Mount. Because of this fact, the first Gospel bears the name of St. Matthew ; but it was really written by an unknown Jewish Christian of Palestine about the year A.D. 80. He used, besides Mark and Q, a collection of proof-texts to show that Christ was the fulfilment of Jewish prophecy. This way of using the Old Testament was in accord with allegorical methods of interpretation common among Jewish Rabbis of the time : we do not deem it satisfactory. In " Matthew " we also find that Church practices, which had grown up during the half-century since Christ's death, were believed to have His authority. The book is well suited for reading at public worship ; and was placed first among the Gospels because it was for long most highly esteemed. The modern world values Mark more highly because it is more primitive.

Yet at one time Mark was in danger of being lost, like Q. The end of it has perished. As Professor Burkitt says, all our manuscripts are derived from a single tattered copy. St. Luke, far more than the author of the first Gospel, was a historian in the modern sense. Besides Mark and Q, he managed to reach highly valuable sources of information. From these came incidents that women were especially likely to have remembered: from them also came the great parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, which he alone has preserved.

The *Fourth Gospel* still remains an enigma: its authorship and its historical value are fiercely disputed. It is not a biography so much as a spiritual interpretation of the life of Christ. It stands in somewhat the same relation to the other Gospels as does Plato's *Apology* to a life of Socrates. Without doubt, the author also wrote the three Epistles of St. John: without doubt he preserved accurate traditions of the career of Jesus which are independent of, and sometimes correct, the other Gospels. But his theology is a development of that of St. Paul; he is "St. Paul's best commentator." Probably St. John, the beloved disciple, the son of Zebedee, in the beginning made his own intimate knowledge of Christ the basis of addresses and meditations. The memory of these was preserved by a group of followers, who were also influenced by St. Paul's teaching and by current Greek philosophy. And finally some man of genius among the group produced within the period A.D. 100–115 the Gospel which bears St. John's name. Whatever its origin, it is, as Clement of Alexandria called it towards the end of the second century, the "spiritual" Gospel. The writer clearly stated his purpose in composing it in the words with which the book ended, before the final chapter was added as an appendix. It was "written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

In the New Testament there are probably ten genuine *Epistles of St. Paul.* The first to be written, the two letters to the *Thessalonians*, must be dated about A.D. 50: they are probably the earliest works in the New Testament. At intervals of a year or two between each, there followed the

Epistles to the *Corinthians*, *Romans*, and *Galatians*. The remaining letters to the *Colossians*, *Philemon*, the *Ephesians*, and *Philippians* were probably written about A.D. 60. It is, however, just possible that Ephesians is not a genuine Epistle of St. Paul: its vocabulary differs somewhat from that of the undoubted letters. St. Paul was probably born about the same time as Christ, converted a few years after the Crucifixion, and executed during Nero's persecution of the Christians in A.D. 64. His Epistles thus cover little more than the last ten years of his life. They are true letters, and not theological treatises in disguise. There is in them little systematic unity, and they show a surprisingly rapid development of thought. The later Epistles contain many echoes of the pagan mystery-religions. In the "mysteries," Professor Gilbert Murray says, men sought "for some magic of redemption in which purification and passionate penitence should count for more than a mere upright life." To this end men were initiated into mystical brotherhoods, which had sacraments and fasts: they believed that thereby they could obtain communion with some deity and immortality through salvation. It was natural that converts to Christianity from these forms of faith should retain many of their old ideas. What surprises us is that St. Paul, with his Jewish background, should have been so willing to use the language of these alien cults. With their magic he had no sympathy: he remained a Jew for whom faith issuing in righteousness was all-important. But, as Dr. Inge says, though he "was ready to fight to the death against the Judaising of Christianity, he was willing to take the first step, and a long one, towards the Paganising of it."

The debt which Christianity owes to St. Paul is so vast that we need not try to measure it. There is indeed a danger that he, and not Jesus, may be thought of as the virtual founder of the Christian faith. Against such exaggeration we ought to guard ourselves. In a sense the Apostle created Christian theology; but, in so doing, he only gave form to Messianic claims which Christ made for Himself. The body is St. Paul's: his Master gave the spirit and the life.

The Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus* which bear the name

of St. Paul are almost certainly " much-edited fragments " of genuine letters of the Apostle. They lay emphasis on details of Church organisation which, by natural development, became important a generation after St. Paul's career ended. Their language is unlike his : and above all we miss the ringing note of his evangelical faith. If we assume that they took their present shape about A.D. 100, we shall not go far wrong.

The *Epistle to the Hebrews* bears in its title St. Paul's name : but from quite early times men of insight saw that he could not have been its author. It was written about the year A.D. 80, possibly for Jews in Rome, where it was known before the end of the first century. It is the most elaborate literary work in the New Testament, a short treatise rather than a letter. Because of its polished precision we still find it fairly easy to read, though its Jewish background of High Priest and sacrifice and its allegorical use of Scripture are foreign to our thought. There are in it some finely eloquent passages.

The *First Epistle of Peter* and the Epistles of *James* and *Jude* are all short works, and there is no agreement among scholars as to their authorship and date. " James " is the most Jewish book in the New Testament : its note of kindly authority and its atmosphere of simple goodness make it singularly attractive. If it was written by " the brother of the Lord," it must be one of the earliest Christian writings which have survived. The First Epistle of Peter has originality and a certain distinction : it is interesting in that it stands, as it were, midway between St. Paul's Hellenism and the Judaic Christianity of St. James. " Jude " is mainly remarkable because the writer refers to late Jewish legends preserved in works called *The Book of Enoch* and *The Assumption of Moses*. The so-called *Second Epistle of Peter* is the latest book in the Bible. It was written between the years A.D. 130–150, and has little historical and no literary value.

The *Revelation of St. John the Divine* is a book of remarkable grandeur and power. It is the work of a Jew who though he wrote in Greek, thought in Hebrew and constantly used Hebrew idioms. Its style proves conclusively that its author was not the St. John of the Fourth Gospel.

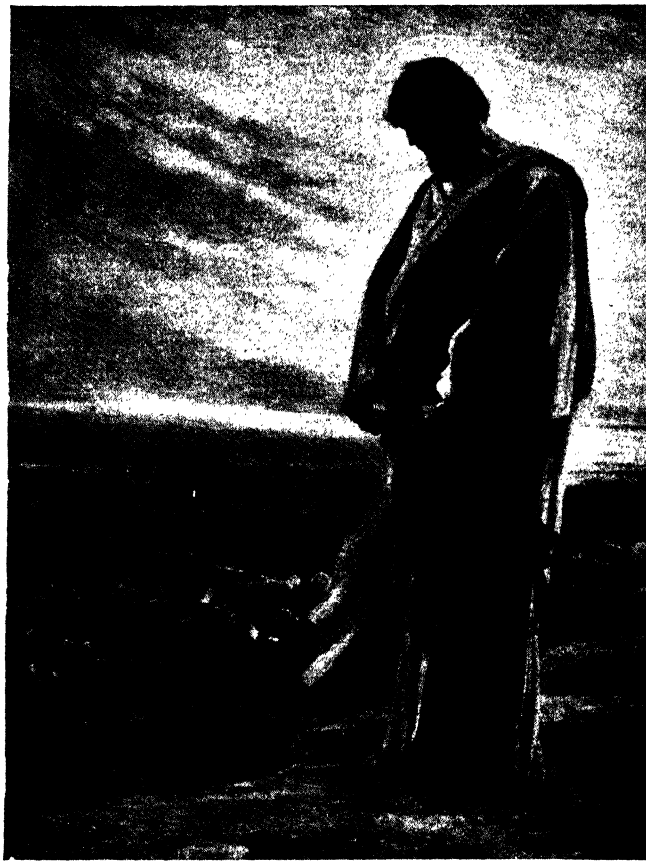


*Photo: Braun, Clement & Co.*

" JESUS MOURNS OVER THE CITY," BY PAUL H. FLANDRIN.

". . . thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

The greater part of it is poetry rather than prose : and the poetry has rare beauty and sublime simplicity.

Dr. Charles gives, as an example of its character :

> And I saw a new heaven and a new earth ;
> For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away
> And there was no more sea.
> And the holy city, New Jerusalem, I saw
> Coming down out of heaven from God,
> Made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

The seer, whose visions are so rich in imagery and spiritual insight, was apparently a Christian from Galilee who migrated to Ephesus and completed his book during the persecution of Domitian about the year A.D. 95. Like the writer of the book of Daniel, he used the later Jewish form of prophecy which we term Apocalyptic. His object was to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom of God upon earth, and to assure the persecuted Christians of the final triumph of goodness. That triumph will be realised when " the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ." The faithful are to follow wherever the Lamb that was slain may lead : for them, whether they live or die, there can be no defeat. With such splendid optimism the Bible ends.

## § 8

### TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

After the time of Ezra (450 B.C.) Hebrew gradually ceased to be a living language. When Jesus taught, though Hebrew was still used in worship, the Jews of Palestine spoke a dialect called Aramaic. The great international language at that time was Greek. In fact, after Alexander the Great (330 B.C.) conquered the Persian Empire, Greek speedily became the common speech of the Jews who spread over the Eastern Mediterranean in pursuit of trade. In Alexandria there was, from its foundation, a large Jewish colony ; and for their needs a translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek was begun about the year 240 B.C. It was probably finished within the next two centuries ; and is known as the *Septuagint*. It contained a number of works,

now in our Apocrypha, which were not in the Hebrew Old Testament. This Greek version is especially important because New Testament writers very frequently quote it when they refer to passages in the earlier part of the Bible. The New Testament itself was originally written in Greek and until about the year A.D. 200 the Christian Church normally used Greek Scriptures. About that time these Greek Scriptures were translated into Latin. Some two centuries later the great scholar Jerome made a more accurate Latin translation of the whole Bible. For this purpose he used, not the Septuagint, but the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. He thus produced the *Vulgate*, which to this day remains the standard Latin translation of the complete Bible.

The first complete English version of the Old and New Testaments resulted from Wycliffe's attempt to evangelise England. In the fourteenth century the Church in England was wealthy and powerful; formal worship was magnificent; but, as Chaucer's writings plainly show, there was dire need of a religious revival. Wycliffe saw the need; and, like the Reformers a century and a half later, realised that the Bible must be the basis of Christian teaching. So in order that his "poor preachers" might "faithfully scatter the seed of God's Word," he and his followers produced about the year A.D. 1382 a translation of the Scriptures, made from the Latin Vulgate. The officials of the unreformed Church sought to prevent its circulation. But it spread far and wide, though printing was unknown and only manuscript copies could be obtained. Wycliffe had the insight of a great spiritual leader. May we contend that he knew the religious temperament of his countrymen and divined that they would love the Bible if they could have it in their own tongue?

By the end of the fifteenth century printing had been discovered, and the great Dutch scholar Erasmus published the first Greek Testament in A.D. 1516. Erasmus lived and lectured at Cambridge while beginning to prepare his work; and the fame which the University thus gained as a home of the New Learning helped to make it the intellectual centre of the English Reformation. To Cambridge in A.D. 1515 there came an Oxford scholar named William

Tindale, who was henceforth to devote his life to translating the Bible from the original Greek and Hebrew. Tindale's New Testament was published in A.D. 1526; and, when he was martyred abroad ten years later, he had finished about half of the Old Testament. Meanwhile, in the year A.D. 1535, Miles Coverdale gave to the world the first printed English Bible. Revised versions then began to appear in rapid succession, as scholars and divines worked with enthusiasm and skill in the golden age of English literature. Finally our Authorised Version was published in 1611; and, notwithstanding the greater accuracy of the Revised Version published in 1885, it remains *the* Bible of the English-speaking peoples.

The supreme literary excellence of the Authorised Version has made it the greatest of English classics. Owing to the superb beauty of its language, the Bible has an importance in our literature which is unparalleled elsewhere. It has been well said that its English "lives on the ear like a music that can never be forgotten." To the fortunate chance that it was made in the sixteenth century, when our language was in its vigorous prime, we must attribute its extraordinarily fine quality. Yet, if any one man deserves especial praise for his share in the work, it is Tindale. More than four-fifths both of the New Testament and of the Pentateuch is his; and the influence of his magnificent prose is manifest throughout the whole version. He described himself with sincere humility as "speechless and rude, dull and slow-witted"; but, if he had not the pen of a ready writer, there was magic in his style. As a scholar he was laborious, accurate, and honest. For him "every part of Scripture had one sense and one only, the sense in the mind of the writer." He regarded his work as a Divine Service to which he had been called, and solemnly protested that he never altered one syllable against his conscience. Moreover, he fully realised that the English language is peculiarly fitted to translate the Bible. "The Greek tongue agreeth more with the English than with the Latin. And the properties of the Hebrew tongue agree a thousand times more with the English than with the Latin." Above all, he sought to serve the common people. In early manhood, speaking to one of his Cambridge

friends, he said, " If God spare me life, ere many years I will cause the boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scriptures than you do." The spirit which inspired Tindale gave us the Authorised Version.

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the influence of that Version on the English language and on English thought. The Bible made English Puritanism; and the Puritan tradition has fostered in the British and American peoples most of their best and distinctive qualities. From the Bible Milton and Bunyan took the inspiration of their poetry and allegory. In the Bible Cromwell and the Pilgrim Fathers found that which made them honourable, self-reliant, and stedfast. Bible in hand, Wesley and Whitefield transformed their country. In England all the great Victorians, and in America men so diverse as Emerson and Walt Whitman, showed the direct influence of the Authorised Version. It fashioned the art of Browning and George Eliot, Ruskin and Watts. John Bright, supreme among English orators in the nineteenth century, was essentially a man of one book, the Bible. So, too, was Abraham Lincoln, genius alike in statecraft and speech.

The Bible is still the most precious part of the common heritage of the Anglo-Saxon races. The surface of our common culture is littered by transient enthusiasms, vulgar emotions, and moral wreckage; but below strong currents move steadily. In large measure these currents flow from the Bible, which now for four centuries has been the ultimate source of Anglo-Saxon idealism. The Bible has shaped the English language; but it has also been the supreme spiritually-creative force in the civilisation of the British Empire and the American Commonwealth.

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## IV

## THE ENGLISH BIBLE AS LITERATURE

SOME considerations of the Bible as literature may well be added to Bishop Barnes's scholarly description of its history.

There are people who demur to the study of the Bible as literature on the ground that the Word of God should be spared this kind of examination. Although it is difficult to take the contention seriously it is necessary to answer it. The best reason for studying the Bible as literature is that it *is* literature. The books of the Bible have every characteristic of literature, and in the course of time they have been subject to all the adventures and misadventures which beset literary documents.

To consider the Bible as literature is not to neglect, much less to deny, its sacred character. Indeed, those who still accept the doctrine of literal inspiration should be the first to perceive that the Divine method of expression would be itself divine, and that it would consist in using the most beautiful and moving language known to the men to whom it was delivered. If that be so, then the study of the beauty of the Bible as literature is more than relevant to the general study of the Bible as the Word of God.

### § 1

The highest advantage of the study of the Bible as literature is that it enables us, in some real measure, to understand what the Bible means. Written originally in Hebrew and Greek, painfully and inaccurately copied, doubtfully translated, transmitted to us through a thousand mists of doctrine and prejudice, it is yet still infused with the poetry, the visions, the metaphor, and the folklore of the East, to all of which we are alien. Thus the Bible, of all books, needs

a commentary, and until comparatively recent years the kind of commentary which it has most conspicuously lacked is that which Literature alone can supply. "To understand that the language of the Bible is fluid, passing, and *literary*, not rigid, fixed, and scientific, is the first step towards a right understanding of the Bible," says Matthew Arnold. To read the Bible *literally* is the way to scepticism; to read it as *literature* is the way to essential and reasonable belief. Burns knew this when he wrote his "Cotter's Saturday Night." In two stanzas of that beautiful descriptive poem he presents the two great aspects of the English Bible; its messages to the soul and conscience, and its indestructible literary quality. Take them in this order:

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er with patriarchal grace,
The big *ha' Bible*, ance his father's pride:
His bonnet reverently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets[1] wearing thin and bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales[2] a portion with judicious care
And "Let us worship God," he says, with solemn air.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
How Abram was the friend of God on high;
Or Moses bade eternal warfare rage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
Or how the royal bard did groaning lie
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
Or Job's pathetic plaint and wailing cry;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Broadly speaking, in the first stanza we have the Bible as the Word of God, in the second the Bible as literature. The one and the other make that Bible which has passed into the life and speech of the people, ennobling both.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, lecturing at Cambridge on "Reading the Bible," once placed before his students a few great sentences like these:

Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.

[1] lyart haffets, grey temples. [2] wales, chooses.

And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality . . .

Then he said: "When a nation has achieved this manner of diction, these rhythms for its dearest beliefs, a literature is surely established. . . . The Authorised Version set a seal on our national style. . . . It has cadences homely and sublime, yet so harmonises them that the voice is always one. Simple men—holy men of heart like Izaak Walton and Bunyan—have their lips touched and speak to the homelier tune."

Bunyan derived his thought and his style from the English Bible. And Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* and his *Pilgrim's Progress* lead us back to this well of homely religion and English undefiled. Bunyan knew the Authorised Version of the English Bible as perhaps no other man has known it. Its language became his breath. In passage after passage of *The Pilgrim's Progress* we seem to be reading the Bible through the medium of his own words. Take these words of Mr. Greatheart in the Valley of the Shadow:

This is like doing business in great Waters, or like going down into the deep; this is like being in the heart of the Sea, and like going down to the Bottoms of the Mountains: Now it seems as if the Earth with its bars were about us for ever. But let them that walk in darkness and have no light, trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon their God. For my Part, as I have told you already, I have gone often through this Valley, and have been much harder put to it than now I am, and yet you see I am alive. I would not boast, for that I am not mine own Saviour. But I trust we shall have a good deliverance. Come let us pray for light to Him that can lighten our darkness, and that can rebuke, not only these, but all the Satans in Hell.

The language of the Bible shaped the speech of England, and Bunyan learned to use that language better than anyone else. In *The Pilgrim's Progress* the common people found no word or sentence they did not understand.

The Professor of English Literature in Cambridge University continued: "Proud men, scholars—Milton, Sir Thomas Browne—practise the rolling Latin sentence, but upon the rhythms of the Bible they, too, fall back. . . .

The precise man Addison cannot excel one parable in brevity or in heavenly clarity: the two parts of Johnson's antithesis come to no more than this, '*Our Lord has gone up to the sound of a trumpet; with the sound of a trump our Lord has gone up.*' The Bible controls its enemy Gibbon as surely as it haunts the curious music of a light sentence of Thackeray's. It is in everything we see, hear, feel, because it is in us, in our blood."

Coleridge said that it "will keep any man from being vulgar in point of style." Assuredly it kept the Bedford tinker from being vulgar, and hardly less Daniel Defoe. The Bible profoundly influenced Ruskin's style; "it is ingrained," says his biographer, "in the texture of almost every piece from his pen." Macaulay refers to our Bible as "a book which, if everything else in our language should perish, would alone suffice to show the whole extent of its beauty and power." Milton declared: "There are no songs comparable to the songs of Zion, no orations equal to those of the prophets." Landor wrote to a friend: "I am heartily glad to witness your veneration for a book which, to say nothing of its holiness or authority, contains more specimens of genius and taste than any other volume in existence." And Hobbes had the literary study of the Bible in mind when he shrewdly wrote in "Leviathan": "It is not the bare words but the scope of the writer that giveth the true light by which any writing is to be interpreted; and they that insist upon *single texts*, without considering the *main design*, can derive nothing from them clearly; but rather by casting atoms of Scripture as dust before men's eyes, make everything more obscure than it is."

It has sometimes been asked whether the Authorised Version of 1604–11 could have been done without the aid of men of letters, and even one or more poets. How could the cadences of the Psalms, the sublime questions and answers of the Book of Job, the rhapsodies of Isaiah, and the eloquence of Paul at Athens have been rendered by forty-seven scholars of whom not one has left his mark on literature? The extraordinary suggestion has been made that Shakespeare who, in 1604, was at the height of his genius, may have been called in to give poetry and majesty to

our Bible. Such surmises are not needed. The English language was then at its highest pitch and purity. Shakespeare had written most of his plays; two years earlier he had written *Hamlet*. The Elizabethan lyrical poets had taught Englishmen the music of their tongue. Spenser's verse was the river of that music. Dramatists like Massinger, Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher, Marston, and Webster had brought up their cohorts of words and splendid phrasings. Literature was in the air. Never had there been a time so favourable to great results, nor has there been one since.

§ 2

This is only part of the matter. The forty-seven did not, as is commonly supposed, produce a creative version of the Bible. As Bishop Barnes has pointed out, they produced a new and better one. The literary excellence of the Authorised Version was discovered rather than achieved. The new translators found it in all the English versions on which they worked, chiefly in those of Tindale and Coverdale. Wycliffe's translation from the Vulgate, completed by other hands so early as 1388, aided them the least. The wellspring was William Tindale, who had added to scholarship a command of noble English. He worked on the basis of Erasmus's Greek and Latin texts, the Vulgate, and Luther's German translations. On one side of the door of St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet Street the head of Tindale is carved in stone. The journalists who day by day inform or beguile the million are reminded of the man who vowed he would make the Bible known to the English ploughboy. And he did. When the Emperor Charles had him strangled in what is now a suburb of Brussels the ploughboy was on the way to read the Scriptures in the language of his fathers, and the habit of reading was being planted in England.

Miles Coverdale's Bible of 1535 was translated from the Latin and German with much reference to Tindale, and is often superior to Tindale's in its music. Matthew's Bible, edited by John Rogers, the Smithfield martyr, appeared in 1537 and contained unpublished versions by Tindale of the book of Joshua onwards to the end of the second book

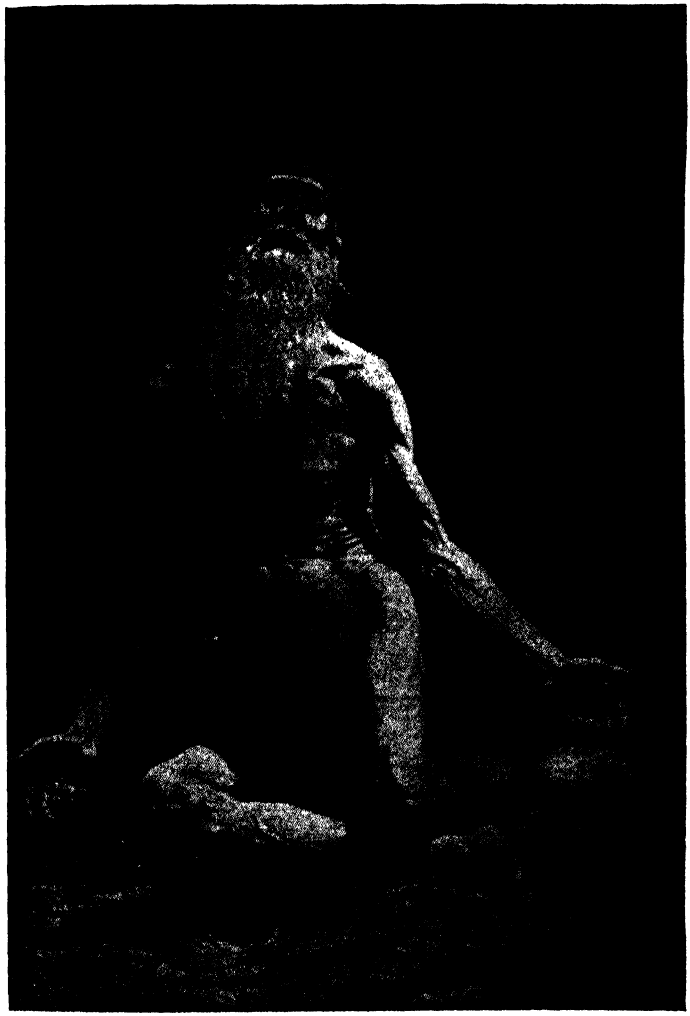


*Photo: Neurdein.*

"JOB IN HIS AFFLICTION," BY LÉON BONNAT.

The Luxembourg, Paris.

"Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again? . . . Are not my days few? Cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return."—*Job* x.

of Chronicles. This Bible, something of a patchwork, was followed by the Great Bible, edited drastically by Coverdale; it was the first English Bible printed with government authority.

A rather later version is of interest because it was translated at Geneva by English exiles from England who had fled the Marian persecutions. While they laboured under the Alpine snows the fires of Smithfield were smoking. They were thus occupied for two years, and had not finished their revision when Elizabeth's accession made them free to return. This "Genevan" Bible was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth in 1560. It was more literal than those of Tindale and Coverdale, and also better founded on the Hebrew for the Old Testament and the Greek for the New. It is still known as the "Breeches Bible," from its rendering of Genesis iii. 7: "They sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves breeches."

The later Bishops' Bible, 1568, superintended by Archbishop Parker, was virtually the immediate forerunner of the Authorised Version. It became known as the "Treacle Bible" from its text (Jeremiah viii. 22): "Is there no treacle in Gilead?"

When, therefore, King James's translators met in Westminster and Cambridge to give us the Bible of to-day they had a wealth of original and interpreted literature on which to work. They were instructed to follow the Bishops' Bible as closely as possible. Actually, their finest passages are from Tindale. It is instructive to take a view of the development of the language and literary quality of the English Bible, by quoting, in succession, the renderings of one short passage, Hebrews i. 7–9, as they appear in four versions, using the conspectus appended to Dr. Frederic G. Kenyon's *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*. As he remarks, it will be seen how greatly Tindale's translation has influenced the others, not least the Authorised Version:

*Tindale*, 1525

And vnto the angels he sayth: He maketh his angels spretes, and his ministers flammes of fyre. But vnto the sonne he sayth: God thy seate shal be for ever and ever. The cepter of thy kyngdom is a right cepter. Thou hast loved righteweesnes and hated iniquitie: Wherfore hath god, which is thy god, anoynted the with the oyle off gladnes above thy felowes.

*The Bishops' Bible*, 1568

7. And vnto the Angels he sayth: He maketh his Angels spirites, and his ministers a flambe of fyre.
8. But vnto the sonne (he sayth) Thy seate O God (shalbe) for euer and euer: The scepter of thy kingdome (is) a scepter of ryghteousnesse.
9. Thou hast loued ryghteousnesse, and hated iniquitie: Therefore God, euen thy God, hath annoynted thee with the oyle of gladnesse, aboue thy fellowes.

*The Authorised Version*, 1611 (*in the original spelling*)

7. And of the Angels he saith: Who maketh his Angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.
8. But vnto the Sonne, *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, *is* for euer and euer: a scepter of righteousnesse *is* the scepter of thy kingdome.
9. Thou hast loued righteousnesse, and hated iniquitie, therefore God, *euen* thy God, hath anointed thee with the oyle of gladnesse aboue thy fellowes.

*The Revised Version*, 1881

7. And of the angels he saith,
   Who maketh his angels winds,
   And his ministers a flame of fire:
8. but of the Son *he saith*,
   Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;
   And the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.
   Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity;
   Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee
   With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

§ 3

In the last version the passage is printed, as it ought to be, as poetry. In our Authorised Version, prose is cut up into "verses" (an arrangement unknown until the Genevan translators adopted it), but all the sweet or magnificent outbursts of poetry are printed as prose. For these reasons Professor Moulton declares roundly in his invaluable work, *The Literary Study of the Bible*, that the Bible is the worst printed book in the world. The eye is not allowed to help the mind in recognising its literary structure. It is as though we printed the poems of Shelley and Wordsworth as prose. Thus even the full beauty of the last words of the Sermon on the Mount is veiled by the form given to them. Yet these words are a perfect example of that

Hebrew poetry into which the prose of the Bible suddenly breaks when the feeling is exalted or the imagination touched :

Everyone therefore which heareth these words of mine,
and doeth them,
shall be likened unto a Wise Man,
which built his house upon the Rock :
And the rain descended,
and the floods came,
and the winds blew,
and beat upon that house ;
and it fell not ;
for it was founded upon the Rock.

And everyone that heareth these words of mine,
and doeth them not,
shall be likened unto a Foolish Man,
which built his house upon the Sand :
And the rain descended,
and the floods came,
and the winds blew,
and smote upon that house ;
and it fell :
and great was the fall thereof !

These stanzas are from the Revised Version of 1881, in which several expressions are changed for the better. Here we have a beautiful poem in the free verse of the Hebrews. Note its perfect parallelism.

*Parallelism of thought and expression*—a sort of magnified alliteration—is the distinctive mark of all Hebrew poetry, of its proverbial literature, and of much of its narrative Professor Moulton well described its movement. "Like the swing of a pendulum to and fro, like the tramp of an army marching in step, the versification of the Bible moves with a rhythm of parallel lines" ; and he illustrated this neatly to his students by referring them to verses 8–15 of the 105th Psalm. First read the passage, omitting all the alternate or parallel lines, thus :

He hath remembered his covenant for ever : the covenant which he made with Abraham, and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a statute, saying, "Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan," when they were but a few men in number, and they went about from nation to nation. He suffered no man to do them wrong, saying, "Touch not mine anointed ones."

You are now to read the passage in full, that is preserving all the parallelisms. What was prose is suddenly transmuted into a grand movement of verse :

He hath remembered his covenant for ever,
The word which he commanded to a thousand generations
The covenant which he made with Abraham,
And his oath unto Isaac ;
And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a statute,
To Israel for an everlasting covenant :
Saying, " Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan,
The lot of your inheritance " :
When they were but a few men in number ;
Yea, very few, and sojourners in it ;
And they went about from nation to nation,
From one kingdom to another people.
He suffered no man to do them wrong :
Yea, he reproved kings for their sakes ;
Saying, " Touch not mine anointed ones,
And do my prophets no harm."

The entire Book of Job, excepting only the first two chapters, and part of the last, is poetry, and ought never to have been printed in any other form. Only then can we appreciate the full majesty of such a passage as this :

Hast thou given the horse strength ?
Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder ?
Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper ?
The glory of his nostrils is terrible.
He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength :
He goeth on to meet the armed men.
He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted :
Neither turneth he back from the sword.
The quiver rattleth against him,
The glittering spear and the shield.
He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage :
Neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.
He saith among the trumpets, Ha, Ha :
And he smelleth the battle afar off,
The thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

Or this :

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth ?
Declare, if thou hast understanding.
Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest ?
Or who hath stretched the line upon it ?
Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened ?
Or who laid the corner stone thereof ?

When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy.
Or who shut up the sea with the doors,
When it broke forth as if it had issued out of the womb?
When I made the cloud the garment thereof,
And thick darkness a swaddling band for it,
And brake up for it my decreed place,
And set bars and doors,
And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further:
And here shall thy proud waves be stayed.

This parallelism obtains through all the moods of Hebrew poetry, though with variations which cannot here be displayed. And it is found to be almost miraculously appropriate to literary forms which are far apart. It gives pungency to mere worldly wisdom, as in Proverbs vi. 6:

Go to the ant, thou sluggard;
Consider her ways, and be wise:
Which having no guide,
Overseer, or ruler,
Provideth her meat in the summer,
And gathereth her food in the harvest.
How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?
And when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?
Yet a little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to sleep:
So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth,
And thy want as an armed man.

In passing, note that wonderfully true and deadly simile, "as one that travelleth"—one that has far to come, may be, but yet comes nearer and nearer and at last arrives like footsore doom.

But now consider the different effect of the principle of repetition in the barbaric song of Deborah:

The kings came and fought,
Then fought the kings of Canaan
In Taanach by the waters of Megiddo.
They took no gain of money.
They fought from heaven;
The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.
The river of Kishon swept them away,
That ancient river, the river Kishon.
O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.
Then were the horsehoofs broken,
By the means of the pransings, the pransings of their mighty ones.
. . . . . .

Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be,
Blessed shall she be above women in the tent.
He asked water, and she gave him milk;
She brought forth butter in a lordly dish.
She put her hand to the nail,
And her right hand to the workmen's hammer;
And with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head,
When she had pierced and stricken through his temples.
At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down:
At her feet he bowed, he fell:
Where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

In the Hebrew literature this principle of repetition—found in all others in degree—is so predominant that it simplifies the whole problem of translation. Matthew Arnold pointed out that by reason of its comparative omnipresence the effect of Hebrew poetry "can be preserved and rendered in a foreign language as the effect of other great poetry cannot." The effect of Homer, of Virgil, or of Dante can never be successfully rendered because the literary architecture of these poets has to be pulled to pieces and cannot be rebuilt to alien music. "Isaiah's, on the other hand, is a poetry, as is well known, of parallelism; it depends not on metre and rhyme, but on a balance of thought, conveyed by a corresponding balance of sentence; and the effect of this *can* be transferred to another language." One may open the book of Isaiah almost at random and discover the truth of this law. Take this passage:

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be laid low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely all flesh is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

This passage, like hundreds of others, serves to illustrate another habit of Hebrew poetry which has everything to do with its permanence. Metaphor is the soul of poetry, and here all the metaphors are simple and natural. The visions called up are such as are native to man's understanding in

all ages: the pathless desert, the frowning hills, the grass of the field.

§ 4

The Hebrew mind was simple and the Hebrew eye was fixed on the common objects of life. The sun, the moon, and the stars, the wind and the rain, the darkness and depth of the sea, the cedars of Lebanon, the bulls of Bashan, the well or the pool, the winepress, the mill, the corn yellow to harvest, the green pastures and still waters, the rose of Sharon, the great rock in a weary land, the potter's wheel, the husbandman's toil, the sparrow and the eagle, the wild goats and calving hinds, the hen gathering her chickens, silver and gold, spear and shield, flesh and bone—such are the objects of life, common to all ages, to which these old poets went for their imagery. In that immortal rhapsody on love at first sight, Solomon's Song, how marvellously are the swoonings and raptures of love expressed through the medium of everyday things:

Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah,
Comely as Jerusalem,
Terrible as an army with banners.
Turn away thine eyes from me,
For they have overcome me:
Thy hair is a flock of goats
That appear from Gilead.
Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep
Which go up from the washing . . .
As a piece of pomegranate are thy temples
Within thy locks.
. . . . . .
Who is she that looketh forth as the morning,
Fair as the moon,
Clear as the sun,
And terrible as an army with banners?
I went down into the garden of nuts
To see the fruits of the valley,
And to see whether the vine flourished,
And the pomegranates budded.
Or ever I was aware, my soul made me
Like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.

Beyond this realism Hebrew poetry never stretches. The abstract is unknown to it.

Yet there is another secret of the permanence of the Bible as literature at once simpler and greater. Human nature and its working-out in reward or punishment, the wisdom of life and the penalties of ignorance or neglect, have not changed since Abraham sat in the door of his tent in the heat of the day. They have not changed since he rose up early and saw Sodom and Gomorrah go up "as the smoke of a furnace." They have not changed since Sarah was jealous of Hagar, and Abraham groaned to cast out his bondwoman because of his son Ishmael; nor since he saddled his ass to take Isaac into the land Moriah to be a burnt offering to Jehovah. They have not changed since Isaac went out to meditate in the field at eventide, expectant of his bride, and saw the camels coming; nor since Esau was honest and foolish, and Jacob wily and wise; nor since Rachel came to water her father's sheep at the well of Haran; nor since Joseph's brethren said, "Behold this dreamer cometh," and cast him into a pit, and afterwards knew the dreamer as the master of Egypt and their own protector. They have not changed since Moses, accepting his own doom, said to Israel:

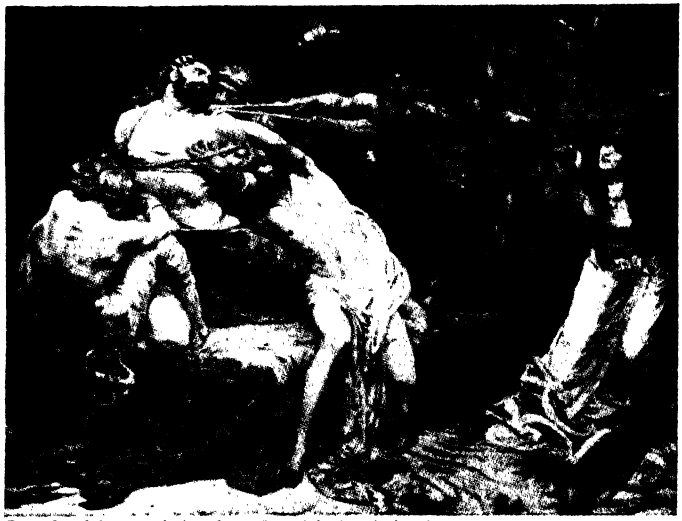
> The eternal God is thy refuge,
> And underneath are the everlasting arms;

nor since Ruth said to her husband's mother: "Intreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." They have not changed since David triumphed over Goliath or Samson succumbed to the craft of Delilah.

If we turn to the New Testament, where in all the literature of all peoples shall we find a more moving story than this?

> And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a Prophet.

mighty in deed and word before God, and all the people. And how the chief Priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he, which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the Sepulchre; and when they found not his body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of Angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us, went to the Sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said, but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of



*Reproduced by permission from the original painting in the possession of the Liverpool Corporation.*

"SAMSON AND DELILAH," BY SOLOMON J. SOLOMON, R.A.

heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went, and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent: And he went in, to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one unto another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?

Simplicity and beauty of narrative can go no further.

The sacred associations of the New Testament make it difficult to treat some of its most sublime passages as literature. In a lower degree the same may be said of the Old Testament. But there is a portion of Hebrew literature which, being apart from the whole and yet of it, can be studied with deep advantage and may even be the best door by which to enter the subject. We refer, of course, to the Apocrypha. At the age of sixty-three Dr. Samuel Johnson, the best-read man of his time, and one of the best-read men of all time, wrote in his diary, "I have never yet read the Apocrypha." Inasmuch as the Apocrypha contains literature of surpassing beauty, and a wisdom of life hardly less exalted than any that we find in the Old Testament, this was a strange confession. It went, indeed, a little farther than the facts, for Johnson added, "I have sometimes looked into the Maccabees, and read a chapter containing the question, *Which is the strongest?*—I think in Esdras." The story is one of the finest in the Apocrypha. It tells how three young men of the guard of King Darius proposed that they should compete for the utmost favour of the King, to sit next to him, and to be called his cousin; and that the winner of this essay competition (for such in fact it was) should be he who most wisely answered the question, "What is the strongest thing in the world?"

The first wrote, "Wine is the strongest," and gave his reasons; the second wrote, "The King is the strongest," and gave his reasons; the third wrote, "Women are strongest, but above all things truth beareth away the victory." They read their replies before the King and a great concourse. The third competitor showed that women had borne the King, and all rulers, and all people, and that they led and ruled all men by their love and beauty, and their spells. But he concluded:

> Great is the truth, and stronger than all things. All the earth calleth upon the truth, and the heaven blesseth it, all works shake and tremble at it, and with it is no unrighteous thing.
>
> Wine is wicked, the King is wicked, women are wicked, all the children of men are wicked, and such are all their wicked works, and there is no truth in them. In their unrighteousness also they shall perish.
>
> As for the truth it endureth, and is always strong, it liveth and conquereth evermore.

With her there is no accepting of persons, or rewards, but she doeth the things that are just, and refraineth from all unjust and wicked things, and all men do well like of her works. Neither in her judgment is any unrighteousness, and she is the strength, kingdom, power and majesty of all ages. Blessed be the God of truth.

All the people shouted assent, and Darius told the young man to ask of him what he would, "and more than was appointed in the writing," and to sit next to him, and be called his cousin.

So that, although Dr. Johnson had not read the Apocrypha, he had read a passage which must have appealed profoundly to him as a man who once said humbly, "Sir, I considered myself as entrusted with a certain portion of truth," and on another occasion, "Without truth there must be a dissolution of society."

The Book of the Wisdom of Solomon contains splendid passages. Hear the writer's praise of Wisdom:

Wisdom reacheth from one end to another mightily,
And sweetly doth she order all things.
I loved her and sought her out,
From my youth I desired to make her my spouse,
And I was a lover of her beauty.
In that she is conversant with God, she magnifieth her nobility
Yea, the Lord of all things himself loved her.
. . . . . .
If a man desire much experience:
She knoweth things of old, and conjectureth aright what is to come:
She knoweth the subtleties of speeches, and can expound dark sentences:
She forseeth signs and wonders, and the events of seasons and times.
Therefore I purposed to take her to me to live with me,
Knowing that she would be a counsellor of good things,
And a comfort in cares and grief.

Thus is Wisdom praised, but now hear Wisdom praise herself in the wild and lofty music of Hebrew poetry through the pen of Jesus the son of Sirach, the writer of "Ecclesiasticus":

I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus,
And as a cypress tree upon the mountains of Hermon
I was exalted like a palm tree in Engaddi,
And as a rose-plant in Jericho,
And as a fair olive tree in a pleasant field,
And grew up as a plane tree by the water.
I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon, and aspalathus,
And I yielded a pleasant odour like the best myrrh

As Galbanum and Onyx, and sweet Storax,
And as the fume of frankincense in the Tabernacle.

. . . . . .

I also came out as a brook from a river,
And as a conduit into a garden.
I said, I will water my best garden,
And will water abundantly my garden bed:
And lo, my brook became a river,
And my river became a sea.
I will yet make doctrine to shine as the morning,
And will send forth her light afar off:
I will yet pour out doctrine as prophecy,
And leave it to all ages for ever.

Such is the exalted poetry, such the exhaustion of language, to be found in the Apocrypha.

In addition, it is packed with worldly wisdom, common sense, shrewd counsels about marriage and friendship, and lending and borrowing, and bargaining, and tact, and everyday prudence. One could show some of our best-known proverbs can be traced to these books. But we conclude by quoting a passage in which the writer we have just quoted turns his eyes — with a charity surpassing, perhaps, anything in the canonical books of the Old Testament—on the average man. After picturing the ploughman, the ox-driver, the carpenter, the graver of seals, the smith, and the poor potter, each at his work, he exclaims:

Without these cannot a city be inhabited.
And they shall not dwell where they will, nor go up and down:
They shall not be sought for in public counsel,
Nor sit high in the congregation:
They shall not sit on the Judges' seat,
Nor understand the sentence of judgment:
They cannot declare justice, and judgment,
And they shall not be found where parables are spoken.
*But they will maintain the state of the world*
And all their desire is in the work of their craft.

That may not be the whole of man's civic wisdom, or of his social vision, to-day, but if not it is one of the noblest eulogies ever penned. It deserves to be as well known as that great tribute to genius and leadership in the same book:

Let us now praise famous men,
And our Fathers that begat us.
The Lord hath wrought great glory by them,
Through his great power from the beginning.

Such as did bear rule in their kingdoms,
Men renowned for their power,
Giving counsel by their understanding,
And declaring prophecies. . . .
Such as found out musical tunes,
And recited verses in writing.
Rich men furnished with ability,
Living peaceably in their habitations.
All these were honoured in their generations,
And were the glory of their times.
. . . . . .
Their seed shall remain for ever,
And their glory shall not be blotted out.
Their bodies are buried in peace,
But their name liveth for evermore.

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# V

# THE SACRED BOOKS OF THE EAST

EVERY religion has its sacred book — generally a collection of hymns, legends, theological speculation, and directions for ceremonial rites. There is one curious difference between the Bible of the Christians and any other of the world's sacred books. Christianity is mainly the religion of the Western world—of Europe and America—but its Bible came to the West from the East. The Sacred Books with which this chapter is concerned were for the most part the creations of the countries where they are still held in veneration, and when that is not the case, as with the writings of Gautama the Buddha and Zoroaster, of contiguous countries. Wisdom comes from the East, but the wisdom that remains in the East is far less virile wisdom than the wisdom that has travelled westward. With the exception of the Koran and the Granth of the Sikhs, the Sacred Books of the East had their origin in a remote antiquity, and are sometimes the almost haphazard collection of the work of many men living in many ages.

## § 1

### THE VEDAS OF THE BRAHMANS

The first of the Sacred Books in order of antiquity are the Vedas of the Brahmans. The Hindus, the adherents of the social conventions and complex polytheism generally known as Hinduism, form 70 per cent. of the population of the Indian peninsula. Racially they are in part descended from the Aryans, who, in an early stage of the world's history, crossed the Himalayas from the high plateau which was the cradle of the Aryan race. As is, of course, well known, all the great European races — the Latins, the

Teutons, the Celts, and the Scandinavians—are of Aryan descent, as are the people of Persia. India was already thickly inhabited when the Aryans moved south, bringing with them their religion and their culture. The consequence was a mixture of races, the Aryan element retaining the position of an aristocracy through the caste system, and the development of a curious and almost incomprehensible religion. Hinduism, to apply one generic name to the system which includes the worship of thirty-three thousand different gods, almost every village having its own particular deity, is a degradation of Brahmanism, which, in its original pure form, was brought from the north by the Aryan invaders four thousand years ago.

Most religions owe their institution to one great personality — Christianity to Jesus Christ, Buddhism to Buddha, Confucianism to Confucius, and so on. Hinduism and Brahmanism, on the other hand, cannot be traced back to any one great teacher. Orthodox Brahmanism teaches the existence of an all-embracing spirit called Brahma, the original cause and the ultimate goal of all living things. At its beginning, therefore, Brahmanism was as absolutely monotheistic as Mohammedanism itself. But with the conception of an abstract all-embracing deity there arose a second belief in the existence of three great gods, each representing one aspect of absolute power. These gods are Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the preserver; and Siva, the destroyer. According to an Indian legend, the first Brahma created the primordial waters, and in them placed a seed which became a golden egg. In this egg Brahma, the creator, was born, and after his birth he created the heaven and the earth from the two halves of the shell from which he had come. Another myth states that Brahma was born from a lotus which grew out of the body of the god Vishnu. Brahma, the creator, is usually represented as a bearded man with four heads and four hands. One hand holds a sceptre, the emblem of power; another a bundle of leaves representing the Vedas, the sacred books which will presently be described; another a bottle of water from the Ganges, the Hindu sacred river; and the fourth a string of beads, of course representing prayer. It should be said that though Brahma is one of the three great

titular deities of Brahmanism and Hinduism, he is by no means a popular god. In all India there are only four temples dedicated to his worship, and he possesses far fewer devotees than the gods of purely local eminence.

The most important characteristic of the Hindu social system is supplied by the castes—a religious creation. There were originally four castes—the Brahmins, the priests and teachers; the Kshatriyas, the warriors; the Vaisyas, farmers, merchants, and landowners; and the Sudras, the hewers of wood and drawers of water. In the course of the ages, these four original castes have been subdivided into hundreds of minor castes, but with all the changes, the Brahmans, who took their name from the god Brahma, have retained their pre-eminent position. Unlike most priests, the Brahmans marry, and generally marry within their own caste, and they are undoubtedly more purely Aryan than any other modern Indians.

In the religion of the Hindu village to-day with its beast-shaped gods; its faith in scores of amulets—dogs' teeth, crocodiles' teeth, the tusks of boars and elephants—its elaborate sacrificial ritual and countless prayers, little remains of the original Brahmanism except the belief in the transmigration of souls and in the doctrine of Karma, which teaches that after many experiences in different bodies, the number of which is determined by the good or evil deeds done in the flesh, the soul finally finds release from individuality and is reabsorbed in Brahma, the all-embracing spirit. The doctrine, in other words, is that each individual soul is like Brahma and has neither beginning nor end; the condition of every man's existence is the consequence of his acts in a previous existence. The soul, it is conceived, may have renewed individual existence in varying living forms until it is finally "freed from all taint of individuality and released from all activity or suffering," and finds its eternal bliss in the all-embracing spirit Brahma.

One must note the stubborn way in which Brahmanism and Hinduism have continued to exist despite the idealistic teaching of Gautama, the Buddha, despite the forceful and generally successful proselytism of Moslem conquerors, and despite all the efforts of Christian missions. The Brahman remains the teacher of the Indian people and the



BRAHMA, THE CREATOR.



VISHNU, THE PRESERVER.



SIVA, THE DESTROYER.

These drawings show the three principal gods of ancient Brahmanism, each representing one of the qualities of the godhead.

custodian of their traditions, and the Brahman still learns by heart the verses of the Vedas, the sacred writings which were recited thousands of years ago before the ancestors of these Brahman priests made their southward trek. When the Vedas were finally written out, they were written in Sanscrit, now a dead language, which bears the same relation to the languages of India as Latin bears to Italian, and which has been preserved in the Vedas exactly as Latin has been preserved in the ritual of the Roman Catholic Church. Though the Vedas now exist in manuscript, the pious Brahman, as we have said, still learns them by heart, since it was written : " Those who sell the Vedas, and even those who write them, those also who defile them, they shall go to hell."

The word Veda means knowledge. The Vedas consist of four books of hymns and prayers, four collections of prose writings explaining the origin and the meaning of the hymns and the prayers, and two collections of theological speculations based on the poetical texts.

The hymns of the *Rig-Veda* are at least three thousand years old, that is, probably three hundred years older than the oldest book in the Bible, but they record the religious beliefs of a far more distant age, of the time when the Aryans were still living on the tableland north of the Himalayas, and before they had begun their emigrations westward to become the ancestors of the modern European peoples. So in these Vedas we have almost the words of a generation of men, from whom we are descended and who existed ages before the Greeks and the Romans.

The following are striking passages taken from the Upanishads, the philosophic section of the Vedas. The quotations are from Dr. L. D. Barnett's *Brahma Knowledge* :

Made of mind, bodied in breath shaped in light, real of purpose, ethereal of soul, all-working, all-desiring, all-smelling, all-tasting, grasping this All, speaking naught, heeding naught—this is my Self within my heart, smaller than a rice-corn, or a barley-corn, or a mustard-seed, or a canary-seed, or the pulp of a canary-seed—this is my Self within my heart, greater than earth, greater than sky, greater than heaven, greater than these worlds. All-working, all-desiring, all-smelling, all-tasting, grasping this All, speaking naught, heeding naught—this is my Self within my heart, this is Brahma ; to Him shall I win when I go hence. He with whom it is thus has indeed no doubt.

"What is the Self?"

It is the Spirit made of understanding among the Breaths, the inward light within the heart, that walks abroad, abiding the same, through both worlds. He meditates, as it were; He hovers about, as it were. Turned to sleep, He passes beyond this world, the shapes of death.

This Spirit at birth enters into the body, and is blent with evils; at death He passes out, and leaves evils.

## § 2

### THE BUDDHIST SCRIPTURES

Unlike Brahmanism, Buddhism can be traced back to the teaching of one man, Gautama. The founder of Buddhism was an Indian, and though Buddhism is an idealised development of Brahmanism, there is only a handful of Buddhists in India to-day. Buddhism is related to Brahmanism somewhat as Christianity is to Judaism or Protestantism to Roman Catholicism. Four-fifths of the modern Buddhists are Chinese, and large numbers of them are found in Japan, Korea, Tibet, Siam, and Ceylon.

Gautama was born in the north of Bengal between 600 and 500 B.C. He belonged to the ruling family of the country. He was rich and good-looking, married to a beautiful wife, and the father of one child, but his life of ease and plenty became insupportable.

When he was twenty-nine, he rode away from his home with one servant. After he had travelled a little way, he sent the servant back with his horse and his sword and changed clothes with a ragged beggar, as St. Francis did generations ago. For a time he lived in a cave with a number of learned men, and then, after a long, lonely struggle, during which he was "the loneliest figure in history battling for life," he collected disciples in the city of Benares and taught them his doctrines. Gautama was one of the splendid figures in world-history—lonely, self-sacrificing, inspired. Gautama's last words were: "Decay is inherent in all component things. Work out therefore your emancipation with diligence." After his death his words were repeated by his disciples, exactly as the words of Christ were repeated by St. Peter and his comrades after the sacrifice on Calvary. It was not till many years after

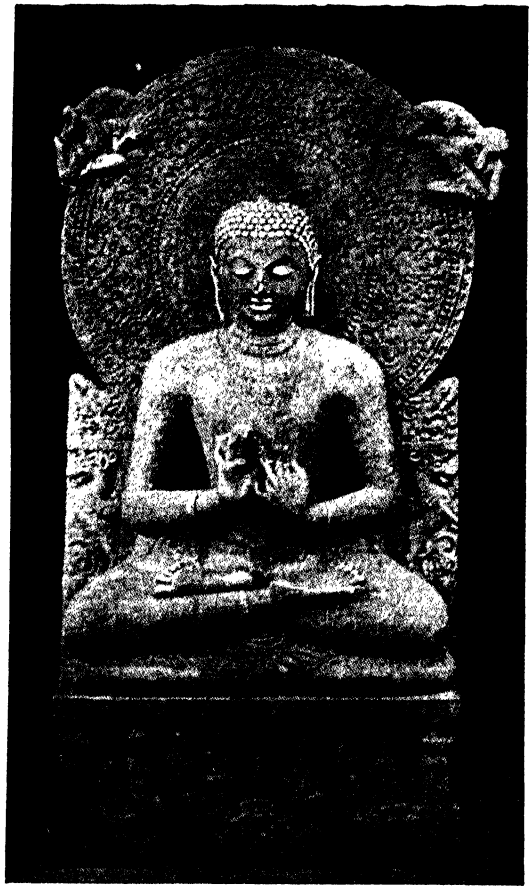


*Photo: Rischgitz Collection.*

BUDDHA PREACHING.

(Statue discovered at Sarnath, 1904.)

The great Indian philosopher, Gautama the Buddha, lived about 500 B.C. He taught us that "deliverance from suffering is to be obtained through the suppression of desire."

his death that the teachings of Gautama were written down in what are called the Pitakas or Baskets. The Pitakas were written in Pali, the spoken language of the common Indian people, which bears much the same resemblance to Sanscrit as Italian bears to Latin.

The teaching of Gautama has been described shortly by Mr. H. G. Wells in *The Outline of History*. The following passage summarises the Gospel of Buddha :

" The fundamental teaching of Gautama, as it is now being made plain to us by the study of original sources, is clear and simple and in the closest harmony with modern ideas. It is beyond all dispute the achievement of one of the most penetrating intelligences the world has ever known.

" We have what are almost certainly the authentic heads of his discourse to the five disciples which embodies his essential doctrine. All the miseries and discontents of life he traces to insatiable selfishness. Suffering, he teaches, is due to the craving individuality, to the torment of greedy desire. Until a man has overcome every sort of personal craving his life is trouble and his end sorrow. There are three principal forms the craving of life takes, and all are evil. The first is the desire to gratify the senses, sensuousness. The second is the desire for personal immortality. The third is the desire for prosperity, worldliness. All these must be overcome—that is to say, a man must no longer be living for himself—before life can become serene. But when they are indeed overcome and no longer rule a man's life, when the first personal pronoun has vanished from his private thoughts, then he has reached the higher wisdom, Nirvana, serenity of soul. For Nirvana does not mean, as many people wrongly believe, extinction, but the extinction of the futile personal aims that necessarily make life base or pitiful or dreadful.

" Now here, surely, we have the completest analysis of the problem of the soul's peace. Every religion that is worth the name, every philosophy, warns us to lose ourselves in something greater than ourselves. ' Whosoever would save his life, shall lose it ' ; there is exactly the same lesson. . . .

" In certain other respects this primitive Buddhism differed from any of the religions we have hitherto con-

sidered. It was primarily a religion of conduct, not a religion of observances and sacrifices. It had no temples, and since it had no sacrifices it had no sacred order of priests. Nor had it any theology. It neither asserted nor denied the reality of the innumerable and often grotesque gods who were worshipped in India at that time. It passed them by."

The Pitakas contain the exposition of the Buddhist doctrine, and they include ghost stories, prose aphorisms, various expositions and regulations for the discipline of Buddha's followers, as well as psalms and hymns.

The following quotations will give some idea of the character of the Pitakas. In the second Pitaka there is a collection of verses called "The Path of Right." The extract is from Rhys Davids' *Buddhism*:

For never in this world does hatred cease by hatred;
Hatred ceases by love; this is always its nature.

When by earnestness he has put an end to vanity,
And has climbed the terraced heights of wisdom,
The wise looks down upon the fools;
Serene he looks upon the toiling crowd,
As one standing on a hill looks down
On those who stand upon the plain.

It is good to tame the mind,
Difficult to hold in, and flighty;
Rushing where'er it listeth;
A tamed mind is the bringer of bliss.

As the bee—injuring not
The flower, its colour, or scent—
Flies away, taking the nectar;
So let the wise man dwell upon the earth.

As long as the sin bears no fruit,
The fool, he thinks it honey;
But when the sin ripens,
Then, indeed, he goes down into sorrow.

One may conquer a thousand thousand men in battle,
But he who conquers himself alone is the greatest victor.

Let no man think lightly of sin, saying in his heart, "It cannot overtake me."
As the waterpot fills by even drops of water falling,
The fool gets full of sin, ever gathering little by little.

Gautama's democracy, his revolt against class distinctions and the prevailing caste system, is expressed in the following :

> Not by birth does one become low caste,
> Not by birth does one become a Brahmin ;
> By his actions alone one becomes low caste,
> By his actions alone one becomes a Brahmin.

How like this is to John Ball's :

> When Adam delved and Eve span,
> Who was then the gentleman ?

The study of Gautama's life and teaching do not help much towards the understanding of modern Buddhism, which has become a tangle of varying principles and practice, grafted on to materialistic polytheism. Some idea of the more exalted modern Buddhism can be obtained from Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*.

## § 3

### THE BOOKS OF CONFUCIUS

Another great outstanding name which belongs to about the same period as Gautama is that of Confucius. He " takes rank in China as practically the founder of its literature, of its system of morals, and of its religious ideal or standard." He was free, says one of his disciples, from four things : foregone conclusions, arbitrary determinations, obstinacy, and egoism. Mr. George Haven Putnam has tersely summed up the work of Confucius :

" What is known as the religion of Confucius, comprises in substance the old-time national or popular faith freshly interpreted into the thought and language of the later generation, and shaped into a practical system of morals as a guide for the action of the state and for the daily life of the individual citizen.

" It is interesting to compare the different forms taken by the earliest literary traditions of the different peoples of antiquity. The Greek brings to us as the corner-stone of his literature and of his beliefs, the typical epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* ; poems of action and prowess, commemorating the great deeds of the ancestors, and describing

the days when men were heroes, and heroes were fit companions and worthy antagonists for the gods themselves.

"The imagination of the East Indian has evolved a series of gorgeous and grotesque dreams, in which all conditions of time and space appear to be obliterated, and in which the universe is pictured as it might appear in the visions of the smoker of haschisch. It is difficult to gather from these wild fancies of the earlier Indian poets (and the earlier writers were essentially poets) any trustworthy data concerning the history of the past, or any practical instruction by which to guide the life of the present. The present is but a tiny point, between the immeasurable æons of the past and the *nirvana* of the future, and seems to have been thought hardly worthy the attention of thinking beings.

"The Egyptian literary idea has apparently been thought out in the temple, and it is from the priests that the people receive the record of the doings of its gods and of the immeasurable dynasties of monarchs selected by the gods to express their will, while it is also to the priests that the people must look for instruction concerning the duty of the present.

"The Assyrian records read, on the other hand, as if they were the work of royal scribes, writing under the direct supervision of the kings themselves. The gods are described, and their varied relations to the world below are duly set forth. But the emphasis of the narrative appears to be given to the glory and the achievements of such great monarchs as Sargon and Asshurbanipal, as if a long line of scribes, writing directly for the king's approval, had continued the chronicles from reign to reign.

"The early literary and religious ideals of China took a very different form. We find here no priestly autocracy, controlling all intellectual activities and giving a revelation as to the nature of the universe, the requirements of the gods, and the obligations of men, obligations which have never failed to include the strictest obedience to the behests of the priests, the representatives of the gods. There are no court chronicles, dictated under royal supervision, and devoted, not to the needs of the people, but to the glorious achievements of the monarchs. Nor is there any great epic, commemorating the deeds of heroes and demi-gods.

In place of these we find what may be called a practical system of applied ethics. Confucius was evidently neither a visionary dreamer nor a poet, nor did he undertake to establish any priestly or theological authority for his teaching. He gives the impression of having been an exceptionally clear-headed and capable thinker, who devoted himself, somewhat as Socrates did a century later, to studying out the problems affecting the life of the state and of the individual. With Socrates, however, the chief thing appears to have been the intellectual interest of the problem, while with Confucius the controlling purpose was evidently the welfare of his fellow-men. It was his aim, as he himself expressed it, through a rewriting of the wise teachings left us by our ancestors, so as to adapt them to the understanding of the present generation, to guide men to wise and wholesome lives, and to prepare them for a better future. The work of Confucius stands as the foundation stone of the literature, the morals, and the statecraft of China."

In so far as the Chinese are followers of Confucius, they may be said to have no religion, for religion is the recognition of a superhuman control of human affairs, and no such recognition was taught by the great Chinese philosopher, who was born about the year 550 B.C., at the time when the feudal system in China was breaking up in a turmoil of civil strife. Confucius was an apostle of order and an intense believer in the creation of a powerful central authority. His ideal was the Aristocratic Man—what Carlyle would have called a hero and Nietzsche a superman—who should prove his right to power by the greatness of his character. For some time he was the chief minister of the Duke of Lu, endeavouring to enforce morality by means of etiquette, as if, nowadays, a reformer should insist that the first step towards the righteous life is dressing for dinner. After a time the duke preferred dancing-girls to his philosopher-minister, and Confucius was exiled. He spent the best years of life wandering from state to state, teaching wherever he went, and returning home in his old age to collect his wisdom in his books.

The wisdom of Confucius is contained in five books: *The Book of History*, *The Book of Changes*, *The Book of Poetry*, *The Book of Rites*, and *The Annals of Spring and*

*Autumn.* To *The Book of History* Confucius only contributed a preface; to *The Book of Changes* he wrote several appendices; *The Book of Poetry* was compiled by him from ancient sources; and certain of his sayings have been added to *The Book of Rites*, which was in existence long before his time. Confucius himself protested that by *The Annals of Spring and Autumn* "men would know him and condemn him."

Until recent times, the Chinaman anxious to enter the public service was expected to pass an examination in the works of Confucius and in certain others of the Chinese classics—and in nothing else. Some idea of the teaching of Confucius and of the beauty of his writing may be gathered from the folllowing translated passages quoted from Mr. Giles's *The Sayings of Confucius*:

The Master said: The higher type of man makes a sense of duty the groundwork of his character, blends with it in action a sense of harmonious proportion, manifests it in a spirit of unselfishness, and perfects it by the addition of sincerity and truth. Then indeed is he a noble character.

The higher type of man seeks all that he wants in himself; the inferior man seeks all that he wants from others.

The higher type of man is firm but not quarrelsome; sociable, but not clannish.

The wise man does not esteem a person more highly because of what he says, neither does he undervalue what is said because of the person who says it.

The charm of *The Book of Poetry* is illustrated by the following translation by Mr. Cranmer-Byng:

THE HAPPY MAN

He has perched in the valley with pines over-grown,
  This fellow so stout and so merry and free;
He sleeps and he talks and he wanders alone,
  And none are so true to their pleasure as he.

He has builded his hut in the bend of the mound,
  This fellow so fine with his satisfied air;
He wakes and he sings with no neighbour around,
  And whatever betide him his home will be there.

He dwells on a height amid cloudland and rain,
  This fellow so grand whom the world blunders by;
He slumbers alone, wakes, and slumbers again,
  And his secrets are safe in that valley of Wei.

In China to-day hundreds of thousands of people know all the Confucian books by heart, and even the illiterate cherish the Confucian maxims first taught so many centuries ago.

## § 4

### THE BOOK OF ZOROASTER

Another great Eastern religious teacher was Zoroaster. It is impossible to determine the exact age in which he lived. Some authorities place him as early as 1000 B.C., others contend that he was contemporary with Buddha or Confucius. He taught that in the beginning of things there were two spirits, one standing for light and life, the creator of law, order, and truth; the other standing for darkness and death, the creator of all evil. The two spirits are engaged in eternal combat for the soul of man, and Zoroaster foretold the ultimate triumph of the good spirit. It is said that Zoroaster was the author of twenty books written on twelve thousand cow-hides. Much of his teaching is said to be contained in the Zend-Avesta, the sacred book of the Parsees. It is impossible to determine the exact date at which the present book was compiled, though it probably belongs to the period A.D. 250 to 600.

On the highest point of Malabar Hill, outside the city of Bombay, there are a number of towers, 25 feet in height, on which the Parsees leave the bodies of their dead that they may be eaten by vultures and so may not profane the earth. The religion of the Parsees forbids the burning or burial of the dead. The Parsees are a small people to-day, the only followers of the religion of Zoroaster, who, twelve hundred years ago, were driven out of Persia by the Arabs and settled in India. Centuries ago Zoroasterism had its hundreds of thousands of adherents living on the great plain bounded on the west by the River Tigris, the east by the Indus, on the north by the Caspian Sea, and on the south by the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

One point of great interest about this book, the Zend-Avesta, is that no other existing document is written in the same language. The Zend-Avesta consists of five parts. The first part is made up of a liturgy of prayers and hymns;

the second part is also a liturgy; the third part consists of legends and precepts; the fourth part of songs and invocations; and the fifth of prayers. The character of the Zend-Avesta is illustrated in the following extracts quoted from *The Teachings of Zoroaster*, by Dr. S. A. Kapadia:

With enemies fight with equity. With a friend proceed with the approval of friends. With a malicious man carry on no conflict, and do not molest him in any way whatever. With a greedy man thou shouldst not be a partner, and do not trust him with the leadership. With an ill-famed man form no connection. With an ignorant man thou shouldst not become a confederate and associate. With a foolish man make no dispute. With a drunken man do not walk on the road. From an ill-natured man take no loan. . . . In forming a store of good works thou shouldst be diligent, so that it may come to thy assistance among the spirits.

Thou shouldst not become presumptuous through any happiness of the world; for the happiness of the world is such-like as a cloud that comes on a rainy day, which one does not ward off by any hill. . . .

Thou shouldst not become presumptuous through much treasure and wealth; for in the end it is necessary for thee to leave all. . . .

Thou shouldst not become presumptuous through great connections and race; for in the end thy trust is on thine own deeds.

Thou shouldst not become presumptuous through life; for death comes upon thee at last, and the perishable part falls to the ground.

## § 5

### THE KORAN

Mohammed, one of the most remarkable men in the history of the world, was born in the year A.D. 570. After beginning life as a shepherd's boy, he became the servant of a rich widow, whom he married when he was twenty-five. Like John Bunyan and all other religious mystics, Mohammed began his religious experiences with grievous spiritual doubts and struggles. There were Christian churches in Syria in his days, and many colonies of Jews, and Mohammed must have contrasted their religions with the ignorant superstitions of his own people.

Dr. G. M. Grant has written a dramatic account of the beginning of Mohammed's mission:

"He used to wander about the hills alone, brooding over these things; he shunned the society of men, and

solitude became a passion to him. At length came the crisis. He was spending the sacred months at Mount Hirā, 'a huge barren rock, torn by cleft and hollow ravine, standing out solitary in the full white glare of the desert sun, shadowless, flowerless, without well or rill.' Here, in a cave, Mohammed gave himself up to prayer and fasting. Long months or even years of doubt had increased his nervous excitability. He had had, they say, cataleptic fits during his childhood, and was evidently more delicately and finely constituted than those around him. These were the circumstances in which, according to the tradition of the cave, Mohammed heard a voice say 'Cry!'

"'What shall I cry?' he answered.

"'Cry! in the name of thy Lord who created.
Created man from blood,
Cry! for thy Lord is the bountifullest,
Who taught the pen,
Taught man what he did not know.'

"Mohammed arose trembling and went to Khadijeh, and told her what he had heard. She believed in him, soothed his terror, and bade him hope for the future. Yet he could not believe in himself. Was he not mad, or possessed by a devil? Were these voices of a truth from God?

"Doubting, wondering, hoping, he had fain put an end to a life which had become intolerable in its changings from the heaven of hope to the hell of despair, when again—some time, we know not how long, after—he heard the voice, 'Thou art the messenger of God, and I am Gabriel.' Then conviction at length seized hold upon him; he was indeed to bring a message of good tidings to the Arabs, the message of God through the angel Gabriel. He went back to Khadijeh, exhausted in mind and body. 'Wrap me, wrap me,' he said; and in that position the word came to him:

"'O thou who art covered, rise up and warn!
And thy Lord magnify!
And thy garments purify!
And abomination shun!
And grant not favours to gain increase!
And thy Lord await.'

"Thus it was that the first revelations came to Mohammed."

Mohammed was forty when he began to preach belief in the one true God, insisting on the doctrine of after-death rewards and punishments. Persecution was Mohammed's fate, as it has been the fate of most religious reformers, and to save his life he had to make a midnight flight from Mecca to Medina. This flight—the Hegira—is regarded by Mohammedans as one of the great events in the prophet's life. An army of ten thousand men was sent from Mecca against him, but Mohammed dug a trench and built a wall, and his enemy was unable to prevail against him. This failure marked the beginning of a series of triumphs, and when he died at the age of sixty-two Mohammed was master of all Arabia.

The contents of the Koran, the Mohammedan Bible, were first collected about the year A.D. 635, three years after the death of the prophet. Washington Irving tells us:

> It was shortly after the victory of Khaled over Moseilma that Abu Bekar undertook to gather together from written and all sources the precepts and revelations of the Koran, which hitherto had existed partly in scattered documents and partly in the memories of the disciples and companions of the Prophet. He was greatly urged to this undertaking by Omar, that ardent zealot for the faith. The latter had observed with alarm the number of veteran companions of the Prophet who had fallen in the battle of Akreba. "In a little while," said he, "all the living testifiers to the faith, who bear the revelations of it in their memories, will have passed away, and with them so many records of the doctrines of Islam." He urged Abu Bekar, therefore, to collect from the surviving disciples all that they remembered; and to gather together from all quarters whatever parts of the Koran existed in writing.

It will be seen that the Koran was compiled very much in the same way as the New Testament, and even more, for it not only inculcates a faith, but it is a textbook of civil law.

The unity of God is the basis of the Mohammedan faith, and it was this doctrine that the prophet and his successors taught to "the Arabs, who worshipped the stars; to the Persians, who acknowledged Ormuz and Ahriman; the Indians, who worshipped idols; and the Turks, who had no particular worship." At the present time, the number of people in the world to whom the Koran is the sacred

book and Mohammed the supreme teacher is rather larger than the number of adherents of the Roman Catholic Church. Sixty-two and a half million Mohammedans live in the Indian Empire.

The Koran teaches faith in God—"There is no God but Allah"—faith in His angels, faith in His Scriptures or Koran, faith in His Prophets, predestination, resurrection and judgment after death. To the Moslem, Mohammed is the instrument "whereby the will of the creator of the world has been revealed." The Moslem absolutely believes in the verbal inspiration in the Koran. To him it is an infallible guide to conduct, and he neither questions its facts nor its precepts. Hell is elaborately described in the Koran. There are seven circles in hell. One of them is for wicked Mohammedans, who are released after a certain period of punishment. Another is for Jews, a third for Christians, and the worst hell of all for hypocrites. The heaven of the Koran is thus summarised by Sir Arthur Wollaston:

> It is pictured as beautiful beyond the dreams of imagination, and all that can delight the heart or enchant the senses is there to be found—exquisite jewels and precious stones, the tree of happiness, yielding fruits of size and taste unknown to mortals, streams flowing, some with water, some with milk, some with wine (which, forbidden in this life, is permitted in the next), albeit without any intoxicating properties, and others with honey. But all these glories will be eclipsed by the resplendent houris of paradise; created not of clay, as in the case of mortal women, but of pure musk, and clad in magnificent garments, their charms being enhanced by the enjoyment of perpetual youth. Entertained with the ravishing songs of the Angel Israfil the inhabitants of paradise will enjoy pleasures that surpass all human imagination. Let it not be supposed, however, that the happiness of the blessed is to consist wholly in corporeal enjoyments; far otherwise, for all the varied pleasures of paradise will pale into significance compared with the exquisite delight of beholding the face of the Almighty morning and evening. The idea that women will not be admitted into paradise is a libel upon Islam, though admittedly differences of opinion exist as to whether or not they will pass into a separate place of happiness. Nor is it anywhere explained whether male companions will be assigned to them. One comfort, however, remains to the fair sex in that on entering paradise they are all to become young again.

The Koran teaches belief in the existence of genii as well as of angels. The character of these genii may be gathered from the stories of the *Arabian Nights*. It

commands the faithful to pray five times a day at certain definite times. It commands the giving of alms, fasting (" the odour of the mouth of him who fasteth is more grateful to God than that of musk "), and a pilgrimage to Mecca. The Koran forbids the drinking of wine, gambling, usury, and the eating of certain kinds of flesh. The Koran allows polygamy and makes divorce easy. And it commands the faithful to proselytise, by persuasion and by the sword.

The word Koran means " that which ought to be read." It is divided into a hundred and fourteen chapters, each chapter being subdivided into verses. There are seven ancient editions of the Koran. Two were published at Medina, one at Mecca, one at Cufa, one at Basra, and one in Syria. The seventh is called the common or vulgar edition. Each edition is said to contain 77,639 words and 323,015 letters. Each chapter, except the ninth, is prefixed by the words : " In the name of the most merciful God." The Koran is written in prose in the purest Arabic, though Sale tells us that the sentences generally continued in a long-continued rhyme, for the sake of which the sense is often interrupted. There is little doubt that Mohammed himself was the actual author of the Koran. Mohammedans, however, believe that the first transcript has been from everlasting by God's throne, written on a table of vast bigness called the preserved table, in which are also recorded the divine decrees, past and future. A copy from this table, in one volume on paper, was by the ministry of the angel Gabriel sent down to the lowest heaven, whence Gabriel revealed it to Mohammed by parcels, some at Mecca and some at Medina, at different times during the space of twenty-three years.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Koran was translated into Latin and French, and one of the French versions was translated into English in 1649. George Sale's famous English translation was first published in the year 1734.

The following quotations show the Koran's teaching concerning the nature of God :

To God belongeth the east and the west; therefore, whithersoever ye turn yourselves to pray, there is the face of God; for God is omni-

present and omniscient. To Him belongeth whatever is in heaven and on earth ; all is possessed by Him, the Creator of heaven and dearth ; an when He decreeth a thing He only saith unto it, Be, and it is.

O true believers, beg assistance with patience and prayer, for God is with the patient.

God is bounteous and wise. He giveth wisdom unto whom He pleaseth ; and he unto whom wisdom is given, hath received much good ; but none will consider, except the wise of heart. And whatever alms ye shall give, or whatever vow ye shall vow, verily God knoweth it ; but the ungodly shall have none to help them. If ye make your alms to appear, it is well ; but if ye conceal them, and give them unto the poor, this will be better for you, and will atone for your sins : and God is well informed of that which ye do.

Much of the Koran may be traced to the Bible, and although the Mohammedan has fought fiercely against the Christian the Koran teaches that Jesus Christ, with Abraham and Moses, should be held in the highest reverence as an inspired prophet.

## § 6

### THE TALMUD

Other Sacred Books are the *Granth* of the Sikhs, the *Tao Teh King* of the Chinese philosopher Lao-Tze, who preached the Sermon on the Mount six centuries before Christ, and the Talmud.

The importance of the Talmud lies in the fact that it is the authoritative guide of the great mass of the Jewish people living to-day in the various cities of the Western world. Professor Polano says : " The Talmud is a collection of early Biblical discussions, with the comments of generations of teachers, who devoted their lives to the study of the scriptures. It is an encyclopædia of law, civil and penal, human and divine. It is more, however, than a mere book of laws. It records the thoughts, rather than the events, of a thousand years of the national life of the Jewish people ; all their oral traditions, carefully gathered and preserved with a love devout in its trust and simplicity."

To the devout Jew there is an intimate connection between the ethical and ceremonial sides of religion, and this fact gives the Talmud its interest and importance.

The Talmud took over three hundred years to compile. The work was begun at the beginning of the fourth century A.D., and not finished until the end of the sixth. The Talmud is divided into two parts. The first part is called the Mishna and is a collection of legal decisions based on the laws of the Old Testament. The second part of the Talmud is called the Gemara. The Mishna was written in what Mr. Stanley Cook calls "a late literary form of Hebrew." The Gemara was written in Aramaic, the language in which a great part of our New Testament was originally written.

The following is a typical Talmudic parable :

It happened that the mayor of a city once sent his servant to the market to purchase some fish. When he reached the place of sale he found that all the fish save one had been sold, and this one a Jewish tailor was about purchasing. Said the mayor's servant, "I will give one gold piece for it"; said the tailor, "I will give two." The mayor's messenger then expressed his willingness to pay three gold pieces for it, but the tailor claimed the fish, and said he would not lose it though he should be obliged to pay ten gold pieces for it. The mayor's servant then returned home and in anger related the circumstance to his master. The mayor sent for his subject, and when the latter appeared before him asked :

"What is thy occupation ?"

"A tailor, sir," replied the man.

"Then how canst thou afford to pay so great a price for a fish, and how dare degrade my dignity by offering for it a larger sum than that offered by my servant ?

"I fast to-morrow," replied the tailor, "and I wished the fish to eat to-day, that I might have strength to do so. I would not have lost it even for ten pieces of gold."

"What is to-morrow more than any other day ?" asked the mayor.

"Why art thou more than any other man ?" returned the other.

"Because the king hath appointed me to this office."

"Well," replied the tailor, "the King of kings hath appointed this day to be holier than all other days, for on this day we hope that God will pardon our transgressions."

"If this be the case thou wert right," answered the mayor, and the Israelite departed in peace.

Thus, if a person's intention is to obey God, nothing can hinder its accomplishment. On this day God commanded His children to fast, but they must strengthen their bodies to obey Him by eating the day before. It is a person's duty to sanctify himself, bodily and spiritually, for the approach of this great day. He should be ready to enter at any moment into the Fearful Presence with repentance and good deeds as his companions.

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The Oxford University Press publish an important series, 'The Sacred Books of the East," translations by various scholars, edited by the late Max Müller.

Frederick Warne & Co. publish English translations of the *Koran* and the *Talmud.*

# VI

## GREEK MYTH AND THE POETS

IN an earlier chapter something has been said about the place of the Myth in the ancestry of Literature. The nature of myths was explained. Why (it may be asked) return to the subject? It is necessary to return to it because mythology, like a parent's blood, has passed into all the veins of Literature, of which it is still one of the sweetest and most persisting currents. What the alphabet is to words, and what words are to vocal or written expression of thought—such is mythology to poetry.

### § 1

We are more Greek than we know. Thousands of our most subtle and beautiful words are Greek. Thus no word of a high order is heard more frequently to-day than "psychological"; yet unless, at the back of the mind, one remembers that the word is compounded of the Greek *psyche* (the soul) and *logikos* (appertaining to speaking or reasoning), a true understanding of the word, which will avail one in all its uses and appearances, is not possible; any more than the word "philosophy" can be fully sensed unless one knows that it is simply the Greek *philo* (I love) joined to *sophia* (wisdom): hence, in its essence, the love of wisdom. Even the telephone is less wonderful to a man to whom it does not recall *tele* (far off) and *phone* (sound). This is not to tax the ordinary man with ignorance of Greek; if he does not know these things it is because the curricula of his schooldays did not include a simple and short study of Greek *roots*.

You read a leading article which discusses the reform of some system, and it demands *the cleansing of the Augean stable*. The phrase may have become so familiar in like

connections that you vaguely understand that it refers to a summary turn-out of bad methods or corrupt officials; but its full significance is lost if one does not know that what is now a common phrase is an allusion to the fifth Labour of Hercules, who, at the instigation of Juno, was compelled to undertake twelve colossal tasks, of which the fifth was to clean out the stables, or byres, of Augeas, king of Elis, where three thousand oxen had been untended for thirty years.

So deeply have these names and stories of the dawn of culture infused themselves in our speech that even the least educated refer to them unknowingly. When the two weary Bath chairmen brought Mrs. Dowler from a party at three o'clock in the morning, they were unable to make anyone in Mr. Dowler's and Mr. Pickwick's lodgings hear their prolonged knockings. " ' Servants in the arms o' Porpus, I think,' said the short chairman, warming his hands at the attendant link-boy's torch." This is true to life. The illiterate old chairman did not know that he was expressing his impatience by a perverted allusion to Morpheus the bringer of dreams, the son and servant of Somnus, the deity who presided over Sleep. Yet he referred to Morpheus as directly (and, indeed, as correctly) as does Milton in " Il Penseroso," where he compares the " vain deluding Joys " of life to

> . . . the gay motes that people the sun-beams,
> Or likest hovering dreams,
> The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.

## § 2

### THE GREAT GOD PAN

In recent years the name of no Greek deity has been more on the lips than Pan. The beautiful statue of Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens is a tribute not only to Sir James Barrie's exquisite creation, but to that god of the woods and fields who inspired it. Pan, the son of Mercury and a wood-nymph, has a great place in poetry. His name signifies " all " : hence a temple dedicated to all the gods was called a Pantheon, and a church in which honour is

rendered to the famous dead, such as Westminster Abbey, is often called by the same name. Pan himself was a wild and wandering creature of the woods and mountains.

He was goat-footed and horned, flat-nosed and tailed, yet he played wild sweet tunes on his pipes; and thus he figures as a satyr who pursues the Nymphs and Dryads with unholy love—and also as the spirit of the joy of living the life of nature. Milton writes of

> Universal Pan,
> Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance,
> Led on the eternal Spring.

But Pan was also the dread of all who wandered through a trackless forest or near a gloomy cave. Sudden and unreasonable fear would seize them at the thought of Pan's presence. Hence our word "panic." It is a singular thought that a panic on the Stock Exchange recalls the eerie terrors of darkness felt by Arcadian peasants in ages remoter than any of which history tells.

## § 3

### CUPID AND PYSCHE

The allusions to Greek myths, heard on the common tongue, are endless. Cupid's name is as familiar to-day as when the infant god of love was known to all men as the winged son of Venus by Jupiter, though other fathers—Mars and Mercury—are named. Cupid's name is also Eros; from the one we have our word "cupidity," and from the other "erotic." The story of the estrangement and reconciliation of Cupid and Psyche, one of the most beautiful of the myths, has been referred to in an earlier chapter. It may be regarded as a primitive allegory of the conditions under which men can find immortality.

Psyche's name signifies "a butterfly"—the emblem of the soul's life breaking from mortal bonds. Keats's beautiful "Ode to Psyche" will be recalled. It concludes thus:

> Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
> In some untrodden region of my mind,
> Where branched thoughts, new-grown with pleasant pain,
> Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind;

Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees
  Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep;
And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,
  The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep;
And in the midst of this wide quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With the wreath's trellis of a working brain,
With birds, and bells, and stars without a name;
With all the gardener's fancy e'er could feign,
Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same;
And there shall be for thee all soft delight
  That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
  To let the warm Love in!

The literature of Cupid is the literature of love. Shakespeare brings him into his plays no fewer than fifty-two times, never more beautifully than in *The Midsummer Night's Dream*. Oberon speaks to Puck:

That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal thronéd by the west,
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.

No better example could be found of the transfusion of an ancient story into fine poetry thousands of years after that story was a wisp of fable in the morning of time.

The reason why these and countless other myths have survived till our day, aiding and beautifying expression, is not merely that poets and painters and scholars have loved them; it is primarily their own everlastingness. They typify human experiences which do not, and cannot, change in essentials; there is no need to go on inventing symbols which, being new, would have little of the beauty of these childlike fancies, and none of their immemorial suggestion.

Myth binds the ages together. It may be described as the ozone of literature and art.

It is curious to note how instinctively we resort to fable when new things have to be named or new subjects discussed. In recent years, for example, man has acquired the power of mechanical flight. But his efforts to solve the problem have been beset with peril and tragedy. Hence we now constantly hear allusions to the story of Icarus, just as in an earlier period within our own memory similar allusions to Phaeton were frequent in books and newspapers.

## § 4

### THE ROAD TO RUIN

Phaeton's story has a tragic splendour, for its background is the universe itself. He was the son of Apollo (or Phœbus), the god of the Sun, and the nymph Clymene. He has represented the rash charioteer, or driver, in all ages. And so, when Shakespeare wishes to express Juliet's impatience for the dusk in which she hopes that Romeo will come to her, he makes her exclaim :

> Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
> Toward Phœbus' lodging : such a waggoner
> As Phaethon would whip you to the west,
> And bring in cloudy night immediately.

But, in the story, Phaeton brought much more than darkness on the earth. He begged Apollo to give him proof of his fatherly trust, and Apollo swore by Styx that he would deny him none that he asked. But he repented of his promise when Phaeton begged to be allowed to drive the chariot of the Sun for a single day. " None but myself," he said, " may drive the flaming car of day ; not even Jupiter, whose terrible right arm hurls the thunderbolts." He warned his son of the cosmic perils of the journey. " The first part of the way is steep . . . the middle is high up in the heavens, whence I myself can scarcely, without alarm, look down and behold the earth I see stretched beneath me. . . . Add to all this, the heaven is all the time turning round and carrying the stars with it. I

have to be perpetually on my guard lest that movement, which sweeps everything else along, should hurry me also away. Suppose I lend you the chariot, what will you do? . . . The road is through the midst of frightful monsters. You pass by the horns of the Bull, in front of the Archer, and near the Lion's jaws, and where the Scorpion stretches its arms in one direction and the Crab in another. Nor will you find it easy to guide these horses, with their breasts full of fire which they breathe forth from their mouths and nostrils." The foolhardy Phaeton held his father to his pledge, and was soon seated in the glorious chariot which Vulcan had made with axle and wheels of gold, spokes of silver, and a seat gemmed with diamonds and chrysolite. He took the reins and started on his journey over the earth. He was soon in difficulties. The steeds felt a lighter hand, and rushed headlong from the road. Disaster on disaster followed. The Great and Little Bear were scorched. Other constellations withered. When he neared the earth there was terror below and above. Phaeton had dropped the reins, and was on his knees praying to his father to help. But his prayer was lost in the great cry of dismay from the nations. Forests were aflame, mountains melted, the sea dried up, and mountains beneath it rose into islands. The earth was cracking: cities went up in smoke and fell in ashes. The Nile fled into the desert, where for the greater part of the year it remains to-day. The people of Ethiopia turned black. Neptune himself could not raise his head above the waves he ruled. Earth prayed in her agony to Jupiter to stay the conflagration that would reduce all her life to cinders.

Jupiter heard, and calling all the gods to witness the salvation he intended, hurled a lightning-bolt at the mad charioteer. He was unseated and fell headlong into the River Eridanus, whose nymphs buried him by its waters and raised a tomb to the rash demigod. His sisters mourned him so helplessly and long that Jupiter, in pity, changed them into poplars whose leaves dripped tears of amber on the fatal stream. His friend, Cygnus, wasted away, and him the gods transformed into a swan which for ever haunted the place where Phaeton disappeared. Thus the primitive mind of man, so weak to explain, so quick to imagine,

accounted for desert and drouth and the parched places of the world.

Briefer, but even more applicable now, is the story of Icarus, the son of Daedalus, the Athenian inventor, who had so offended King Minos of Crete that to save himself and his son he made wings for both so that they could fly to safety. Daedalus was skilful, and landed at Cumae, where he built a temple to Apollo. But Icarus flew so near the sun that the wax by which his wings were fastened melted and he fell into a part of the Ægean Sea, which was thenceforth named Icarian. Thus is it that in the twentieth century A.D. the end of Phaeton warns all drivers and that of Icarus all aviators, while both condemn a too soaring ambition such as any man may indulge to his hurt.

## § 5

### STORIES OF THE STARS

The permanence of the Greek myths is secured not only by their part in everyday speech and in literature, but by the fact that a great many of them are recorded in the sky above us, that is to say, in the changeless names of planets, stars, and constellations. God asked Job out of the whirlwind:

> Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?
> Or loose the bands of Orion?

On any starlight night you may see these constellations, the one "like a swarm of fireflies tangled in a silver braid," the other majestic, and, in the spring, "sloping slowly to the west." These are closely related in a myth. The Pleiads were daughters of Atlas, one of the thirteen Titans named by Hesiod, who in their assault on Olympus were cast by Jupiter into the most abysmal pit of Hades—Tartarus. The Pleiads were pursued by the giant, Orion, as they still are, in seeming, in the night-sky of England. In answer to their prayer for succour Jupiter first turned them into pigeons, then into stars. Of these only six can be seen with the eye, and the story is that the seventh, Electra, quitted her place that she might not see the ruin of Troy

which her son, by Jupiter himself, had founded. Hence Byron's line, "Like the lost Pleiad, seen no more below." Milton, recalling the passage in Job, and describing the creation of the firmament and all the heavenly bodies, tells how—

> The grey
> Dawn and the Pleiades before Him danced,
> Shedding sweet influence.

Orion, the belted hunter, who still threatens the daughters of Atlas, was a son of Neptune. The great goddess Diana (or Artemis) learned to love Orion while he joined her in the chase. She is said to have shot him with an arrow, when his head, just appearing above the sea, was guilefully pointed out to her by Apollo as a target on which to test her skill! When she knew what she had done, she sorrowfully set him in the skies.

It often happens that a sequence of stories is recalled by constellations that are near to each other in the heavens. Everyone can pick out the Cassiopea group, in form like an irregular capital W. Cassiopea was the wife of Cepheus, king of Ethiopia. She imprudently proclaimed that she was more beautiful than any of the fifty sea-nymphs, the Nereides, who in their wrath begged Neptune to avenge them. The sea-god sent a terrible monster to ravage the coast, whereupon the Ethiopians sought help from the oracle of Jupiter Ammon in the Libyan desert, and were told that the gods would be appeased if Cepheus exposed his daughter, Andromeda, to the monster. Heart-broken by this demand, Cepheus at last allowed his beloved child to be chained to a rock washed by the sea. Here she was found by Perseus, who, in his winged wanderings, had already slain the terrible Medusa, or Gorgon, on whose serpent locks none could look without turning into stone. He arrived just as the monster was clearing the waves to devour his lovely prey, and, flying down on its back, plunged his sword between its scales and thus destroyed the destroyer. Another version is that he showed the Gorgon's head to the monster, which changed slowly into a rock and, as such, remained for ever to mark the scene. Perseus married Andromeda, and the constellations that bear their names now repeat the story—as do those of Cepheus and Cassiopea.

Many minor deities or heroes or persecuted nymphs were thus removed from earth to sky.

The story of Ariadne is different. Deserted by Theseus on an island which was the haunt of Bacchus, she was found there by the wine-god as he was returning with all his train from a hunt. The story has been told best by Catullus in poetry, and by Titian in his masterpiece, "Bacchus and Ariadne," in the National Gallery.

> Bounding along is blooming Bacchus seen,
> With all his heart aflame with love of thee,
> Ariadne! and behind him, see,
> Where Satyrs and Sileni whirl along,
> With frenzy fired, a fierce tumultuous throng.

These lines of Catullus (translated by Sir Theodore Martin) may well have inspired Titian, whose picture answers to them perfectly. Ariadne became the grateful wife of Bacchus, who gave her a crown of seven stars which, after her death, he threw into the sky to form a constellation.

## § 6

### ECHO AND NARCISSUS

Many of these flowers of myth are perpetuated by flower-names, none more beautifully than the myth of Echo and Narcissus. Echo, the beautiful Oread (nymph of the mountains) annoyed Diana by her ceaseless chatter.

Diana pronounced on her this sentence of punishment: "You shall forfeit the use of that tongue with which you have cheated me, except for that one purpose you are so fond of—*reply*. You shall still have the last word, but no power to speak first." This limitation of her speech greatly troubled her when she wished to attract the love of the beautiful youth Narcissus, who, being a confirmed bachelor, repelled her advances as he had those of many other nymphs. Echo, in her shame and chagrin, sought the rocks and mountains, where her form wasted away until only her voice remained. And by that alone we know her still. But she was soon avenged. Refusing to love any maiden, Narcissus fell in love with his own image in a pool. Unable to embrace it, he pined and died of grief. The



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"ECHO AND NARCISSUS," BY J. W. WATERHOUSE.
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

**Echo, the mountain nymph, became enamoured of the beautiful youth Narcissus, son of the river-god Cephissus. Her inability to do more than echo his words, and his unwillingness to quit a single life, led to tragedy for both.**

repentant nymphs would have given him burial, but when they looked for his young body they found only the flower which bears his name. The story has been touched on by many poets—by Milton in "Comus," by Chaucer, Spenser, and Goldsmith; and by Cowper in his epigram "On an Ugly Fellow":

> Beware, my friend, of crystal brook
> Or fountain, lest that hideous hook,
> Thy nose, thou chance to see;
> Narcissus' fate would then be thine,
> And self-detested thou would'st pine,
> As, self-enamoured, he.

It is clear, then, that the old Greek myths are no esoteric study. So far from being "highbrow" (detestable word!), they are elemental to our language and literature. Men of distinguished birth or origin are prone to assert themselves, and it should not be forgotten that a word or a phrase is equally enhanced by length of history and storage of suggestion. One might refer to hundreds in which a Greek myth is enclosed: such as "Scylla and Charybdis," "rich as Crœsus," "Cerberus," "vulcanite," "amazons," the "heel of Achilles," the "Daily Argus," the "lethal chamber," "sibyl," "nemesis," "Europe," "Titanic," "mentor," "stentorphone," "Nestor," "Pandora's box," "Champs Élysées," "Æolian Hall," "gordian knot," and many more; but space forbids. For any broad understanding of Greek Mythology the reader must be referred to the Bibliography appended to this chapter. In several of the books named he will learn the lie of the enchanted land.

## § 7

### IN THE BEGINNING

Our Bible opens with the simple and sublime statement, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Greek myth is much more confused, but it is as deeply concerned with the beginning of all things, and with the answer to man's eternal question, "Whence?" The most widely accepted story was that of Hesiod, who believed that some great Power impressed itself on Chaos and out of

nothing brought forth all things. The first ministers of this Power were Uranus, the most ancient of all the gods, and Gæa, or Ge, from whose name, as the name of the earth, we derive our words geology, geography, geometrical, and so forth. From this marriage between Heaven and Earth came the portentous progeny of the Titans, who typified the most tremendous forces of Nature, and the three one-eyed Cyclopes, who were fabled to have become the servants of Vulcan and the makers, afterwards, of Jove's thunderbolts. But the most formidable of all the sons of Uranus was Cronus (Time), otherwise Saturn, who, by his sister Rhea, became the father of Zeus (Jupiter), Aides (Pluto), Poseidon (Neptune), and of three daughters, Vesta, Demeter (Ceres), and Hera (Juno).

Uranus feared his offspring and plunged those he feared most into Tartarus. But Saturn rebelled, and after slaying his father with an iron sickle reigned in his stead over heaven and earth. He, in turn, also feared his children, and is fabled to have swallowed each as it was born. This may symbolise the truth that Time swallows all things, or it may have an even deeper meaning.

The story goes that when Rhea had borne her sixth and last child, Jupiter, or Zeus, she saved him by the ruse of wrapping a baby-shaped stone in baby-clothes, which Saturn unthinkingly swallowed.

Meanwhile, Jupiter was hidden in a cave of Mount Ida, where he was suckled by the goat Amalthea and guarded by tenderly vigilant Nymphs. When he had grown adult, he learned of his mother's and his own wrongs and, by means which have no relation to physiology, compelled his father to disgorge his brothers and sisters. Together they defeated Saturn, whose throne Jupiter seized. He divided his universal kingdom with his two brothers, Neptune, who was given the Ocean, and Pluto who was monarch of the dead. Jupiter remained supreme in heaven and on earth. He took his beautiful sister, Juno (the Greeks called her Hera) to wife, by whom, and by others, he begat many of the greater gods and goddesses.

But, first, Jupiter had to fight for his throne on Mount Olympus, which was assailed by the Titans, who, in their cosmic fury, piled Mount Pelion on Mount Ossa to effect

their purpose. In his magnificent unfinished poem "Hyperion," Keats makes this Titan the leader in this assault on heaven.

> Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall?
> Am I to leave this haven of my rest,
> This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,
> This calm luxuriance of blissful light,
> These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes,
> Of all my lucent empire?
> . . . . . .
> Fall!—No, by Tellus and her briny robes!
> I will advance a terrible right arm
> Shall scare that infant thunderer, rebel Jove,
> And bid old Saturn take his throne again.

This stupendous war for the control of all things is described by Hesiod in terms which make the brain reel—though whether, in the advance of destructive science, it will do so much longer is a solemn question.

> Vast Olympus reel'd throughout,
> Down to its rooted base, beneath the rush
> Of those immortals: the vast chasm of hell
> Was shaken with the trembling . . .
> No longer then did Jove
> Curb down his force; but sudden in his soul
> There grew dilated strength, and it was fill'd
> With his omnipotence; his whole of might
> Brake from him, and the godhead rush'd abroad . . .
> Thrown from his nervous grasp the lightnings flew
> Reiterated, swift; the whirling flash
> Cast sacred splendour, and the thunderbolt
> Fell.

And the Titans fell. They were enchained in Tartarus, "so far beneath this earth as earth is distant from the sky."

## § 8

### THE OLYMPIANS

Jove now reigned secure and the great Olympian household was formed. Its chief members were:

JUPITER (or Zeus), the Thunderer, the supreme god, whose altars on earth surpassed all others. He is represented as

throned, with a thunderbolt in his hand, and wearing a breastplate whose name, "ægis," is an English word to-day. His emblem, the eagle, was always represented in his statues. Hence, in *Cymbeline* the soothsayer says:

> Last night the very gods show'd me a vision:
> . . . . . .
> I saw Jove's bird, the Roman eagle, wing'd
> From the spungy south to this part of the west,
> There vanish'd in the sunbeams: which portends,
> Unless my sins abuse my divination,
> Success to the Roman host.

JUNO (or Hera), his wife, who bore Mars (or Ares), Vulcan (or Haephestos), and Hebe. She was queen of heaven. Among her emblems were the peacock and the cuckoo. She distrusted her husband, and loved Greece.

MARS, the god of war.

VULCAN (or Haephestos), the god of fire, and the armourer of the gods.

HEBE, the blooming daughter of Jupiter and Juno, who was the cupbearer to the gods in the Olympian halls and was so beautiful that she was regarded, also, as the goddess of youth. Thus it is that her name is often lightly used to-day as a synonym for "barmaid"; but thus, also, is it one of the names with which poets gem their most beautiful lines. What does Keats say?

> Let, then, winged Fancy find
> Thee a mistress to her mind . . .
> With a waist and with a side
> White as Hebe's, when her zone
> Slipt its golden clasp, and down
> Fell her kirtle to her feet,
> While she held the goblet sweet,
> And Jove grew languid.

APOLLO (or Phœbus), the god of the Sun, and patron of music and poetry, of whom Shelley sings:

> I am the eye with which the Universe
> Beholds itself and knows itself divine;
> All harmony of instrument or verse,
> All prophecy, all medicine are mine,
> All light of art or nature; to my song,
> Victory and praise in their own right belong.

The glorious statue of Apollo Belvedere, in the Vatican, represents him shooting his arrow at the terrible serpent Python, which he slew. Byron describes his pose in "Childe Harold":

> The lord of the unerring bow,
> The god of life, and poetry, and light,
> The Sun, in human limbs arrayed, and brow
> All radiant from his triumph in the fight.
> The shaft has just been shot; the arrow bright
> With an immortal's vengeance; in his eye
> And nostril, beautiful disdain, and might,
> And majesty flash their full lightnings by,
> Developing in that one glance the Deity.

DIANA (or Artemis), the goddess of hunting, daughter of Latona, by Jupiter, and twin sister of Apollo—therefore associated with the moon. She is often identified with Silene. Although she was the patroness of Chastity, she descended to woo Endymion, the youthful shepherd, on Mount Latmos, whose name gives the title to Keats's earliest long poem and to the last of Disraeli's novels. Few names are more frequent in poetry than those of Diana and Endymion.

VENUS (or Aphrodite), goddess of love and beauty, daughter of Jupiter and Dione, but more beautifully fabled to have risen from the foam of the sea. Her name and attributes have passed into all literature.

MERCURY (or Hermes), the young and graceful messenger of the gods, was the son of Jupiter and Maia, the most beautiful of the seven Pleiades. The name Hermes is interpreted as the "hastener." One of Mercury's chief tasks was to conduct the souls of the dead to the banks of the dreadful river Styx, which flowed nine times round Hades. As a swift messenger he wore a *petasus*, a winged hat, and bore in his hand the *caduceus*, a wand of gold twined with serpents and also winged. He was the god of eloquence, and the patron of commerce, even of gambling and thieving, and of all occupations which required craft or cunning. He is said to have made the first lyre out of a tortoise-shell, and to have presented it to Apollo in exchange for the *caduceus*. His manly beauty is referred to in

Hamlet's impassioned speech to his mother as he bade her look at his father's portrait :

> A station like the herald Mercury,
> New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill.

VESTA (or Hestia), daughter of Cronus and Rhea, was the goddess of all public and private hearths. She remained single. The Romans especially honoured her, and in her temple her sacred fire was tended by six virgin priestesses, who were severely punished if they allowed it to expire. In that event it was rekindled from the heat of the sun.

MINERVA (Athene, or Pallas Athene), goddess of wisdom, was in some respects the greatest of the goddesses. She was the daughter of Jupiter and Metis. When Metis predicted to Jupiter that one of his children would supplant him, he endeavoured to make this impossible, so the myth tells us, by devouring his wife. Then, being tortured by pains in his head, he ordered Vulcan to cleave it open with an axe. From his exposed brain Minerva leaped forth fully grown and armed with spear and shield. The event shook Olympus, and Apollo stayed his chariot to contemplate the wonder. The goddess immediately took her place in the Olympian assembly. She remained a virgin, and was the most loved child of Jupiter as having proceeded from himself. She had many powers and functions, but was worshipped in Athens as the goddess of wisdom. Her colossal statue in ivory and gold, by Phidias, surmounted the Parthenon and looked down on the city of which she was protectress. She had won the city as a prize in a competition with Neptune to determine which of them could make the most valuable gift to men. Neptune smote the ground with his trident and from the ground a horse issued; but Minerva produced the olive, which the gods judged to be the more useful, and her reward was Athens, "the eye of Greece, mother of arts and eloquence." The olive-tree was deemed sacred to her.

Minerva is represented with the shield given her by Jupiter, in whose centre was Medusa, upon whose face all who dared to look were turned into stone. Milton puts

into the mouth of the Elder Brother in "Comus" the question:

> What was that snaky-headed Gorgon-shield
> That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,
> Wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed stone,
> But rigid looks of chaste austerity,
> And noble grace that dashed brute violence
> With sudden adoration and blank awe!

These were pre-eminently the deities of heaven.

NEPTUNE (or Poseidon) ruled the sea and all the waters of earth. He wielded the trident, the symbol of naval power to-day. He ruled all the lesser divinities of the waters—Triton, his son by Amphitrite, Proteus, the Sirens, and the Sea-nymphs—Oceanides and Nereids. Shakespeare has many references to Neptune.

## § 9

### THE RAPE OF PROSERPINE

Pluto reigned in Hades, the infernal world whose dread rivers of Styx, Acheron, Lethe, Cocytus, and Phlegethon traversed the realm of darkness in the midst of which he sat on his sulphur throne. No temples were raised to the Lord of Death. No goddess could be induced to be his spouse. Hence arose one of the most beautiful and significant stories in all Greek myth. Demeter (or Ceres), goddess of corn and harvests, from whose Roman name we have our word "cereal," wandered with her daughter Persephone, whose name is also Proserpine, in the flowery plain of Enna, in Sicily. The mother, goddess of the Earth, was a daughter of Saturn and Rhea; their marriage had united Earth to Heaven. Her child, to whom Zeus himself was father, was to unite Earth to Hades.

Proserpine, as the Romans called her, was gathering flowers with her young companions near Enna, when suddenly Pluto appeared in his chariot, loved her at sight, and instantly seized her to be his consort in his silent realm. Proserpine dropped the flowers from her apron and cried aloud to her attendant nymphs, but the ravishing god urged forward his steeds until they were checked by the

river Cyane. There Pluto, in a frenzy of passion, smote the ground with his sceptre; it opened, and gave him passage down to Erebus. The young girl-goddess, torn from the sunlight and the happy earth, had become the bride of the god of death.

Ceres sought her child in a frenzy of grief. She lit two torches at the fires of Mount Etna that she might search the world through the night. Neither gods nor men could, or dared, tell her of Proserpine's fate. Nine days she wandered, and at last, returning to Sicily, she learned the truth from Arethusa, who had just passed through the nether world in her chaste flight from Alpheus. "There," she said, "I saw your Proserpine. She was sad, but no longer was there terror in her eyes. Her look was such as became the Queen of the realms of the dead."

Drawn in her chariot by two dragons, Ceres flew to the abode of the gods, where she awed even Jove by her storm of prayers:

> So mighty was the mother's childless cry,
> A cry that rang thro' Hades, Earth, and Heaven.

Yielding to her, Jove sent Mercury to demand Proserpine of Pluto, but made it a condition of her release that she should not have tasted food in the lower world. When he arrived and Pluto was about to yield, it appeared that Proserpine, walking in the Elysian fields, had sucked the pulp of a pomegranate. This forbade her surrender, but as a compromise it was decreed that she should evermore spend half of the year with her mother on the earth, and half with her husband below it.

Ceres waited with far-off gaze for her coming, and the meeting of mother and daughter has been the theme of poets from Ovid to Tennyson. It is our own poet who describes their meeting:

> A sudden nightingale
> Saw thee, and flash'd into a frolic of song
> And welcome; and a gleam as of the moon,
> When first she peers along the tremulous deep,
> Fled wavering o'er thy face, and chased away
> That shadow of a likeness to the King
> Of shadows, thy dark mate. Persephone!

> Queen of the dead no more—my child! Thine eyes
> Again were human-godlike, and the Sun
> Burst from a swimming fleece of winter gray,
> And robed thee in his day from head to feet—
> "*Mother!*" and I was folded in thine arms.

This is the deathless story. It has but one meaning. Proserpine signifies the seed-corn, which through the winter lies darkly hidden in the soil, and her yearly return is the symbol of the spring.

> So in the pleasant vale we stand again,
> The field of Enna, now once more ablaze
> With flowers that brighten as thy footstep falls.

Nothing that man knows is so interesting to him, or so fraught with the mystery which enlarges without weighing him down, as the change of the seasons. Still, in his poetry and imagination, Ceres and Proserpine walk together hand-in-hand, and once more they lead us, through the lights of spring, to the pomp which is roses, and the wealth which is corn, and the sweetness which is honey in the honeycomb.

. . . . . .

Such, in meagre outline, is that world of myth which shimmers for ever behind "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome." Much of it is crude, or even repellent, but what is beautiful and what is forbidding belongs alike to the childhood of man. Ruskin says: "To the mean person the myth means little; to the noble person much." The poet, the artist, and the dreamer will return to these stories so long as men feel the burden and the mystery of life, and are fain to lose them in "the light that never was on sea or land."

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# VII

# GREECE AND ROME

## § 1

BEFORE proceeding to consider the achievements of the great Greek poets, it is necessary to say something of the Greek spirit, that particular national genius which enabled a small people in the fifth century before Christ to produce a literature of unparalleled grandeur and dignity, to rise to a splendid height of excellence in architecture and sculpture, and to lay the foundations of mathematics, physical science, and philosophy. It has been well said that " with the exception of Christianity, the Greeks were the beginners of nearly everything of which the modern world can boast."

The Greeks had great limitations. They knew nothing about the past. At the best they only guessed. They knew no geography. They knew next to nothing about other peoples. On the other hand, they had one great asset, a beautiful language, particularly fitted, in its power and precision, for the immortal expression of beautiful thoughts. The Greeks themselves were highly civilised, but they were only separated from barbarism by a very thin interval. They were our dawn, but a dawn that came, so far as we know, without preparation or warning. The Greeks were a young people living in the cold clear air of the early morning. There is a strong contrast between the Greeks and the Hebrews. To the Hebrew, the sorrow of the world was due to disobedience to the laws of the one all-powerful God. The Greeks had no idea of a single God, beneficent in intention, directing the affairs of men. They had many gods, constantly warring with each other, only intermittently concerned with human affairs, all of them actuated by human passions, and mainly concerned with their own adventures.

But behind the gods was Fate, determining the destiny alike of men and gods, and against Fate it was useless to contend. That is the prevailing note of Greek tragedy. It brought with it a great sense of dignity. Self-respect demanded that men should accept the decrees of Fate without protest, without pretence that things were other than they were, and without yearnings for the unattainable. Self-respect, too, compelled man to eschew evil and follow good without any thought of the gods of their desires.

The Greeks were never mystics, they were realists. It has been well said that to Homer a wave was " nothing else than salt water." To the Greek death was death. What happened after he did not know and he did not trouble to guess. To the Greek mind man stood alone and unaided in the world, and because he so often triumphed over difficulties and accepted with splendid dignity the hardest decrees of Fate, the worship of humanity became the dominating feature of Greek life and Greek religion. This worship brought with it the love for everything that makes human life fine. The first of these things was beauty. The idols of India and Egypt are hideous and repulsive, signifying terror and power. But the Greeks could only worship beautiful gods, and their statues enshrine the dreams and ideals of the worshippers. With beauty the Greeks loved justice, freedom, and truth—all necessary for the happiness of man.

Perhaps because of the absence of traditions and established conventions, the Greeks were never sentimental. And because they were realists they loved the simple and the unadorned. Greek poetry never has the elaborate ornamentation to be found in such a poem as " Paradise Lost." It is austere. In their literature, as in their sculpture, the Greeks achieved the beauty of simple directness—of sheer truth.

Three facts should be particularly borne in mind. The Greeks were a small people living in a number of City States, each with a few thousand inhabitants, and all of them on the sea. Athens was the most remarkable and most interesting of these States, and by far the greater part of the Greek literature that has come down to us was pro-

duced in one small city, far less in area and with a far smaller population than a London suburb. The second fact is that certainly eighty per cent. of Greek literature has been lost. All that exists was preserved in Alexandria. The third fact is that the wars waged by the Greeks against the Persians occasioned the birth of European patriotism. The fear of the barbarian not only stimulated love of country, but also caused the Greeks to regard themselves as the guardians of culture against barbarian destruction.

The Greek spirit means the love of unadorned beauty, simplicity, truth, freedom, and justice, the dislike of exaggeration, sentimentality, and elaboration.

The old-world stories summarised in the preceding chapter are the substance of Greek romantic literature. Evolved in the dawn of European life, sung by wandering bards, repeated and elaborated from generation to generation, they were first, as has already been related, written out in Hesiod and Homer. In these same stories the great Greek dramatists found the plots of their plays.

It is remarkable in how few years the great Athenian drama was produced. Æschylus gained his first prize in 484 B.C., and the *Medea* of Euripides, the crowning achievement of his career, was produced in 431 B.C. Fifty-three years were sufficient for the complete development of what has been described as "the greatest work of art the world has ever witnessed." A similar remarkable development characterised the drama in Elizabethan England. All the plays of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Webster, and Heywood were written in thirty-eight years!

§ 2

Like the beginnings of mediæval drama in England, those of early Greek drama were religious. They grew out of the ritual dance performed in the spring-time before the shrines of Dionysus, the Bacchus of the Romans, and the intimate connection with the god of vineyards and fruitfulness remained unimpaired in the great days of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. The front row of the seats in the theatre in Athens was reserved for the priests, the Priest

of Dionysus occupying a specially carved arm-chair in the middle. All citizens were expected to attend, and in the days of Pericles, at the height of the power and glory of Athens, the price of their seats was given them by the State. The Athens theatre held 30,000 people. Everyone went to the theatre. It was a national duty.

All the plays performed were the result of competitions held by the Government, which was also what we should call the Church, and the companies which acted them were paid for by wealthy men. If you wished to compete—and there could only be three competitors each year—you had first to be given a chorus, that is to say, some wealthy man would pay for a company which would act the play you were going to write. Because the idea of failure would have been ill-omened in what was a religious ceremony everybody received a prize in the competition.

The practice of the theatre developed as the great tragic period represented by the three authors named above took its course. At the beginning all the action took place in the circular space of the orchestra, and the "scene," as it was called, was not a stage, but merely a tent in which the actors changed their clothes, and which could be used, as the similar curtains at the back of an Elizabethan theatre were used, to represent a door or a gateway or whatever veiled the action from the spectators, because in Greek drama, unlike in our modern plays, everything in the nature of what we should call incident took place "off." In the plays of Æschylus the characters in the chorus occupied this orchestral space, and for that reason, as well as because the chorus was the element from which tragedy as a whole sprang, the chorus had a prominent part in the action of the play. As theatrical technique developed the scene became a slightly raised platform at the back of the orchestra from which the speeches of the actors were generally delivered, the chorus remaining in the orchestra below and tending, therefore, as in most of the plays of Euripides, to become rather a means of commentary on the action than part of it.

The relaxation from tragic tension which in Shakespeare is got for the most part by comic relief was provided in Greek plays by the choral odes and dances. Compare, for

instance, *Macbeth* with the *Hippolytus* of Euripides. In *Macbeth*, unusually for Shakespeare, Duncan is killed in the Greek manner " off " the stage. *Macbeth*, in fact, in its earlier scenes and in its emotional context represents more closely than any other of Shakespeare's plays the Greek way of handling a subject. The tension which the audience must feel as a distracted dialogue between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, when the murder is done, is relieved by the knocking at the gate and the comic scene of the porter. In *Hippolytus*, on the other hand, when Phædra goes off the stage to hang herself, the relief from the tension is not got through any comic relief, which would have been foreign to the whole Greek mode of thinking in drama, but by the ritual dance and the song of the chorus which take the mind of the audience straight away from the tragic reality to the realms of romance.

The actors, like Japanese actors to-day, wore large masks which had probably something of the effect of a megaphone and enabled their voices to be heard clearly at the back of the immense theatre in the open air. They wore buskins, large boots with soles almost like stilts, which gave them an appearance of more than human height, and because of this dress and because of the fact that the story was told by dialogue rather than by obvious action they moved hardly at all across the stage. Below, in the orchestra, grouped round the altar of Dionysus in the middle, was the chorus, motionless while the actors were speaking, and, when their time came, chanting their odes to the rhythmic movements of a dance in which every part of the body had its share, and chanting them not altogether, but in two divisions, so that the verse sung by one half would be answered by a following verse sung by the other. In the telling of the story certain conventions were generally observed. There was usually a prologue explaining the circumstances before the action began. The crisis, as we have said, almost always took place " off," and was always narrated to the audience by a messenger, whose speech generally is the culmination of a play. The play ended, at any rate in the developed technique of Euripides, though not so generally in the two preceding dramatists, with the appearance of some god who summed up in a few words

of comfort or reconciliation the tragic passion of the drama and sent the spectators away with a sense of peace.

§ 3

There is a striking resemblance, both in the novelty of their achievement and the circumstances of their lives, between the writers of the wonder century of Greece—the fifth century B.C.—and the English writers of the Elizabethan era, like Spenser and Raleigh. Æschylus, the eldest of the three great Greek dramatists, was a soldier. He was born in 525 B.C., and he fought in the Athenian army that defeated the Persians at the famous battle of Marathon. This decisive victory of a small people over a mighty empire had an immense effect on the character of Æschylus and of his work. His plays were written in a heroic age when men were stimulated by unexpected and almost unhoped for national success, just as the Elizabethans were stimilated by the defeat of the Spanish Armada.

The first play of Æschylus was produced when he was twenty-six, in the first year, that is, of the wonder century —the fifth B.C. Like Shakespeare, he acted in his own dramas, and though only seven of them are extant, he is supposed to have written ninety. There is a legend that he was killed by an eagle dropping on his bald head, which it mistook for a rock, a tortoise the shell of which the bird had been unable to break.

Religious fervour joined in Æschylus with pride of country and race, the result of the glory of Marathon. He was born at Eleusis (in 525 B.C.), the home of those religious mysteries the nature of which the modern world knows very little. As a boy he must have seen scores of pilgrims troubled in spirit, seeking explanation of life's problems or maybe release from trouble, and he grew up obsessed with the conviction of the impossibility of escape from the fates and furies that pursue the steps of men.

For the plots of his plays he went to the myths of his people. He himself said that his tragedies were " morsels from the banquet of Homer."

What are the qualities of Æschylus that have given his plays immortality and that cause them to be read with

eager interest and enjoyment two thousand four hundred years after they were written? Perhaps their character can best be explained by comparing Æschylus to an Elizabethan, Marlowe, and a modern, Victor Hugo. Like Marlowe, Æschylus was, to use Swinburne's phrase, "a daring and inspired pioneer." In his music there is no echo of any man's before him. Read Marlowe's *History of Dr. Faustus* and you are in touch with the qualities of Æschylus—the horror, the tremendous power, the excited passion. Aristophanes, the Athenian writer of comedies, denounced Æschylus as "bombastic," and it is interesting to note that this is the adjective frequently applied by critics to Victor Hugo, who, in a less degree than Marlowe, possessed some of the characteristics of the Greek poet.

There is never any love interest in the Æschylus plays. He was interested in elemental forces, and he gave Fate and Fear, Justice and Injustice the same individual personality as Bunyan gave to similar qualities in his *Pilgrim's Progress*. In his dramas, as J. A. Symonds said, "mountains were made to speak." So tremendous was the power of Æschylus, that the Greeks believed that he must have written under the immediate inspiration of the gods. One story says that, when he was a boy, he was sent to watch the clusters of grapes in a vineyard, and fell asleep. While he slept the god Dionysus came to him and ordered him to write tragedies. When he awoke he made his first attempt and succeeded at once. Sophocles said of his great rival: "He did what he ought to do, but did it without knowing." Certain of his contemporaries asserted that he wrote his tragedies while drunk with wine. The fact seems to have been that his originality and genius were so astounding that his fellows were forced to find some superhuman explanation for them.

Of the seven plays of Æschylus that have been preserved *Prometheus Bound* is perhaps the most interesting for us from the fact of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. It was the second of a trilogy of plays, the first of which was called *Prometheus the Fire-Bearer*, and the third *Prometheus Unbound*. Both of these have been lost, although a portion of the third translated into Latin by Cicero remains to us.

A summary of the play may give some idea of the mind and manner of the dramatists.

At the beginning of the drama, Prometheus, who has offended Zeus, is chained to a rock by Hephæstus, the god who corresponds to the Latin Vulcan. Zeus has recently established his dynasty in Heaven and has determined to destroy the human race and to populate the earth with a finer creation. Prometheus is the typical benefactor of mankind. He has prevented the god's proposed destruction by giving man the gift of fire, the most ancient of all arts, and subsequently teaching him carpentry, husbandry, medicine, and seamanship. And for this rebellion Zeus has decreed his dreadful punishment. While he is being bound Prometheus remains proudly silent, but when Hephæstus has left him he cries out to the Earth and the Sun to see how he, a god, is wronged by other gods :

> You see me prisoned here, a god ill-starred,
> Of Zeus the enemy, hated of all
> That tread the courts of his omnipotence,
> Because of mine exceeding love for men.

He is visited by the Ocean Nymphs, and to them he emphasises his services to mankind :

> 'Twas I that first to yoke and collar tamed
> The servant steer, and to relieve mankind
> From Labours manifold, the docile steed
> I drew beneath the well-appointed car,
> Proud instrument of wealthy mortals' pride.
> And none save I found for the mariner
> His wave-o'er-wandering chariot, canvas-winged.
> I, that devised thus gloriously for men,
> Myself have no device to rid my soul
> Of her sore burden !

One satisfaction is left to Prometheus. He knows, and he alone, that a dire fate awaits Zeus himself—" It shall hurl him down from power supreme to nothing." His prophecy is repeated to the god, who sends Hermes to Prometheus to demand details of the threatened danger. He refuses to speak. Hermes reminds him of the punishment which has already followed rebellion, and he replies :

> I would not change it for thy servitude.
> Better to grieve than be a lackeying slave.

Further punishment promptly follows. An eagle is sent to gnaw at his flesh ; the earth opens, and the rock to which Prometheus is chained sinks into the abyss.

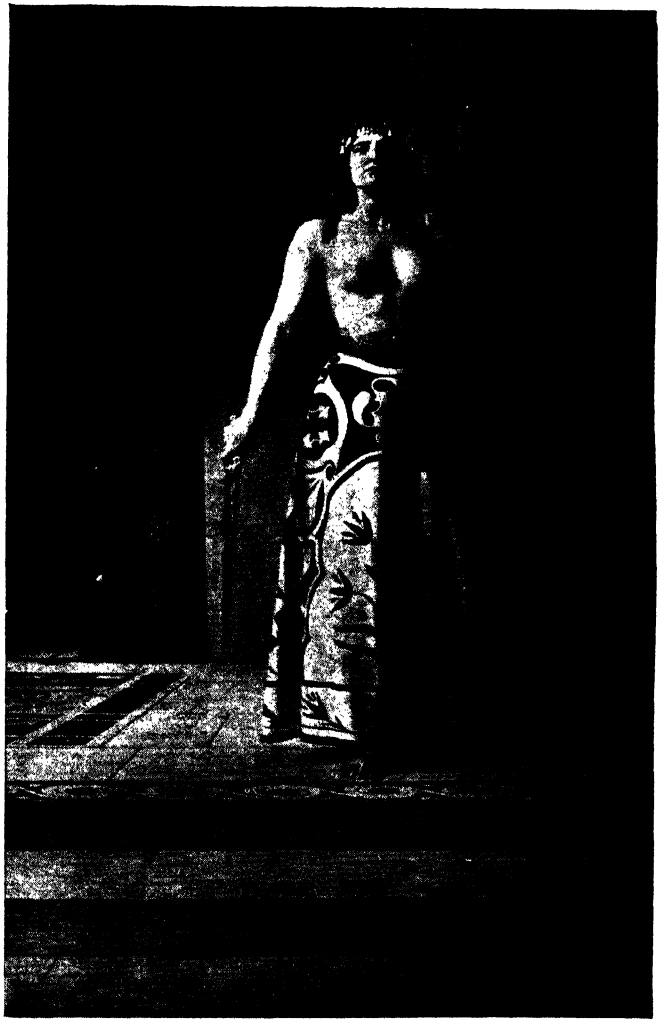
There has been considerable discussion as to the religious meaning that Æschylus attached to his story, and it is suggested that in the third of the plays, one of the two that are lost, Prometheus and Zeus are reconciled. The moral of the trilogy is that the gods " learned the stern spirit of the law, but tempered the disposition with their natural sympathy for humanity. So arose the new order, the rule of reasonable law."

Apart from Prometheus, the most interesting character that Æschylus created was Clytemnestra in the mighty drama *Agamemnon*. Clytemnestra has been compared to Lady Macbeth, but she is really made of harder metal, ready, as J. A. Symonds says, to " browbeat truth before the judgment-seat of gods or men." When she has killed Agamemnon there is no weakening, no regret. She is the minister of Fate, the minister of Justice, the typical " Fury " of the Greeks. Agamemnon is an unattractive character, and the hatred of his wife is not unreasonable. Nothing, however, can excuse Clytemnestra's crime or ward off her punishment. Her son, Orestes, becomes the avenger of his father, and in the *Choephori*, the sequel to the *Agamemnon*, Orestes kills his mother. He is pursued by the Erinnyes, the daughters of the night and the ministers of punishment. In a third play, the *Eumenides*, Orestes after great tribulation is forgiven by the gods. Here, as elsewhere, Æschylus insists that sin must be paid for before it can be forgiven.

Æschylus died in 456 B.C. in Sicily, where he is said to have gone in dudgeon at the fact that the first prize at one of the great dramatic contests at Athens had been awarded to his younger rival, Sophocles.

## § 4

Sophocles was one of the sunniest-natured great writers in the history of literature. He was born in 495 B.C., and was thirty years younger than Æschylus, and fifteen years older than Euripides. As a boy, he was famous for his



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"CLYTEMNESTRA," BY THE HON. JOHN COLLIER.

The central figure of the *Agamemnon*. Clytemnestra has often been compared to Lady Macbeth. She was the typical "Fury" of the Greeks, who "browbeat truth before the judgment-seat of gods and men."

The picture of Clytemnestra painted by Mr. Collier in 1881 was an attempt to put the Homeric story into the Mycenæan age but owing to insufficient information the costume and important details of the architecture are incorrect. In the later version which appears above (painted in 1914) the artist has made use of more recent researches, and has ample authority for all the details.

good looks and his proficiency in music and gymnastics. When he was sixteen, he was chosen to lead the chorus of youths which celebrated the great sea-victory of Salamis. He appeared at this festival naked, crowned with a garland and carrying a lyre. Like Æschylus, he was brought up in an atmosphere of patriotic fervour, but his youth was spent in a more settled age.

The art-loving Athenians held Sophocles in great pride and affection. He was known as the "Attic Bee," and his character was summed up by Aristophanes, after the dramatist's death, when he said that he was "kindly in the Shades even as he was on earth." The popularity of Sophocles can be judged from the fact that in his fifty-seventh year he was appointed, by popular acclaim, general in the Samian war. It may seem to us remarkable to appoint a general simply on account of his genius as a poet, but perhaps there is as much to be said for this method of selection as for the mediæval plan of selecting a commander of military or naval forces on account of his birth. It is not, however, surprising that Pericles should have said that he vastly preferred Sophocles as a poet than as a soldier.

A beauty and pleasure loving poet, living in a beauty and pleasure loving age, could hardly be expected to live according to the tenets of Puritan morality. Moderation, never abstention, was the typical Greek virtue. Plato recalls that, at the end of his life, Sophocles rejoiced at his release from the thraldom of passion. "Most gladly have I escaped from that, and I feel as if I had escaped from a mad and furious master."

Sophocles wrote over a hundred dramas, of which only seven remain to us—*Œdipus the King*, *Œdipus Colonus*, *Ajax*, the *Antigone*, *Electra*, the *Trachiniæ*, and *Philoctetes*. He introduced certain reforms into the conventional form of the drama which had been employed by Æschylus. He gave the actors finer costumes, he increased the number of the chorus, and he sometimes allowed three actors to be on the stage at the same time where Æschylus only allowed two. In this way the dialogue became of much greater importance dramatically. Goethe said of Sophocles's plays: "His characters all possess the gift of eloquence, and know how to explain the motives for their actions so

convincingly that the hearer is almost always on the side of the last speaker."

While the plots of Sophocles's plays are tragic, and while he never escaped from the prevailing Greek idea of Nemesis, the fate which pursues the whole world, there is in his dramas a far greater serenity than there is in those of Æschylus—the serenity of the age in which Athenian society realised its ideals and its aspirations more completely than any human society has done since.

The *Antigone* may be considered as typical of Sophocles's art.[1]

Creon, king of Thebes, has decreed that the body of Polynices, who has been killed during an assault on the city, shall remain unburied: "It hath been published to the town that none shall entomb him or mourn, but leave unwept, unsepulchred, a welcome store for the birds, as they spy him, to feast on at will." In spite of the king's decree, Antigone, the sister of Polynices, determines to bury her brother: "I will bury him: well for me to die in doing that. I shall rest, a loved one with him whom I have loved, sinless in my crime; for I owe a longer allegiance to the dead than to the living."

Arrested for her disobedience and taken before Creon, Antigone made no attempt at denial. She knew the king's edict and what must be the consequence of her act. "For me to meet this doom is trifling grief; but if I had suffered my mother's son to lie in death an unburied corpse, that would have grieved me." Antigone is condemned to be buried alive "in a rocky vault."

There is a love interest in the play. Antigone is betrothed to Hæmon the son of Creon. Hæmon pleads to his father for her, but in vain. The dialogue in the scene between father and son is particularly vivid and extraordinarily modern. Creon is equally deaf to the advice of Teiresias, the blind prophet. The blind man warns the king that swift punishment will follow his obstinacy:

> Thou shalt not live through many more courses of the sun's swift chariot, ere one begotten of thine own loins shall have been given by thee, a corpse for corpses; because thou hast thrust children of the sunlight to the shades, and ruthlessly lodged a living soul in the grave.

[1] The quotations are from Sir Richard Jebb.

And it does. Hæmon hangs himself by the side of Antigone's tomb, and his mother, Eurydice, stabs herself in sorrow for the death of her son. Creon, "a rash and foolish man," is left to mourn alone. The moral of the play is summed up by the Chorus:

Wisdom is the supreme part of happiness; and reverence towards the gods must be inviolate. Great words of prideful men are ever punished with great blows, and in old age, teach the chastened to be wise.

It will be seen that there is a far greater humanity in Sophocles's tragedy than can be found in Æschylus, but in all the Sophocles plays men remain "the playthings of the gods." To quote Gilbert Murray's translation of the full chorus in *Œdipus the King*:

Ye citizens of Thebes, behold; 'tis Œdipus that passeth here,
Who read the riddle-word of Death, and mightiest stood of mortal men,
And Fortune loved him, and the folk that saw him turned and looked again.
Lo, he is fallen, and around great storms and the out-reaching sea!
Therefore, O Man, beware, and look toward the end of things that be,
The last of sights, the last of days; and no man's life account as gain
Ere the full tale be finished and the darkness find him without pain.

Sophocles lived to a tranquil old age. His epitaph was written in the famous lines:

Thrice happy Sophocles! In good old age,
Praised as a man, and as a craftsman praised,
He died: his many tragedies were fair,
And fair his end, nor knew he any sorrow.

## § 5

Æschylus was a soldier; Sophocles was a patriotic Athenian, taking more than a dilettante interest in the public affairs of his city. Euripides, the third and youngest of the great Greek dramatists, was a recluse, out of tune with the times, detesting the moods of the Athenian mob, professing to prefer the simple life of the country to the life of the town. As an artist he was an innovator, and his innovations, his breaking with tradition, made him the butt of Aristophanes, a Tory of Tories who hated all

changes. Euripides was a sour-tempered man and loathed being laughed at :

> My spirit loathes
> Those mockers whose unbridled mockery
> Invades grave themes.

The poet's temper was probably made the sourer by the fact that he had two wives, both of whom were unfaithful to him. Towards the end of his life he left Athens in disgust to live in Macedonia, where he wrote his last play, the *Bacchæ*. His favour with the king roused the jealousy of certain courtiers, who plotted that he should be attacked and killed by savage dogs.

When Euripides began to write, the Athenians had ceased to believe in the gods, whose existence and ever-present power were the basis of the plays of Æschylus. The age of faith had passed. Euripides was compelled to use the elaborate method of the Greek stage, but he chose men and women, not gods, for his dramatis personæ, and, for this reason, he is regarded as the father of romantic drama.

While in many respects the poet was out of tune with his age, he shared its scepticism. His unbelief had a moral basis. To him, the legends were immoral. If they were true, then gods were worthy of neither worship nor respect. If they were untrue, the whole fabric of the ancient Greek religion fell to pieces. He was tolerant of the ancestor worship, common in ancient Greece as in China. He appears to have had no definite belief or disbelief in immortality, nor was he able to accept the existence of " the eternal, not ourselves, making for righteousness." Aristophanes called him an atheist, and the charge was not unjust. But he insists that the absence of belief in God or the gods does not affect morality. Remember that Euripides was a Greek. To him virtue was attractive because it was beautiful. Apart altogether from any consideration of rewards or punishments, happiness or unhappiness, virtue was to be followed and admired for the sake of its beauty.

In the plays of Euripides, there is an acute analysis of character, particularly of the character of women, and this complete understanding of women caused Mr. Gilbert Murray to call the poet " the classic Ibsen."

Euripides wrote at least seventy-five plays, of which eighteen are in existence. Perhaps the best known of them, the *Medea*, has been described by Mr. Gilbert Murray as a tragedy of character and situation. It is one of the poet's earliest works, and it expresses the youth of a writer who is "a sceptic and a devotee of truth." The story of Jason and Medea has been partly told in these pages. The play begins when Jason has grown weary of his sorceress mistress, and has married the only daughter of the king of Corinth. Jason has become a middle-aged man, weary of a hectic love affair and intent only on his career. Medea is now a woman "sullen-eyed and hot with hate." For his daughter's sake the king of Corinth banishes her from the city, allowing her one day's grace before she need leave. In a bitter scene with Jason she upbraids him for his ingratitude. It was she who had helped him to gain the Golden Fleece; it was she who had saved his life; it was she who had killed his usurping uncle Pelias; and at the end of her upbraiding the leader of the Chorus comments:

> Dire and beyond all healing is the hate
> When hearts that loved are turned to enmity.

Jason is resentful, as men always are under the lashes of a woman's tongue:

> Would to God
> We mortals by some other seed could raise
> Our fruits, and no blind women block our ways!

Medea is not the woman to be slighted with impunity, and she plans a complete and horrible revenge. To her rival she will send a deadly gift:

> Fine robings and a carcanet of gold,
> Which raiment let her once but take and fold
> About her, a foul death that girl shall die,
> And all who touch her in her agony.

But even this will not satisfy Medea. Jason must be left, not only wifeless, but childless. To wound her faithless lover she will kill her own children:

> For never child of mine shall Jason see
> Hereafter living, never shall beget
> From his new bride.

In a second interview with Jason she pretends that she is ready to submit to her fate and, when she catches sight of her children, she bursts into tears and, for a few minutes, becomes human.

> Ah! wondrous hopes my poor heart had in you,
> How you would tend me in my age, and do
> The shroud about me with your own dear hands,
> When I lay cold.

But the melting mood soon passes. She rejoices when she hears of the death of the king's daughter, and she determines that her children must die too. She must not tarry in winning the "crown of dire inevitable sin," and the children are hurried to their death. Jason is told of Medea's intention, and frantically endeavours to save his children's lives. He batters at the door of Medea's house, but the children are already dead, and, appearing on the roof in her chariot of winged dragons on which are the children's bodies, she prophesies the fate which is awaiting Jason himself:

> For thee, behold, death draweth on,
> Evil and lonely, like thine heart: the hands
> Of thine old Argo, rotting where she stands,
> Shall smite thine head in twain, and bitter be
> To the last end thy memories of me.

The moral is that to do evil is to contrive suffering. Jason behaved to Medea with base ingratitude. His bad action brought horrible results, not only to himself but to others, while Medea sorrowfully proclaimed herself the victim of her own hard heart. The punishment may seem grotesquely excessive, but that often happens in life, and Euripides insists that, excessive or not, punishment inevitably follows sin, the bill must be paid. To live morally is to live beautifully. To live immorally is to live dangerously, wrongdoing always leading to disaster.

Aristotle lauded the genius of Euripides, and when he died Sophocles, an artist incapable of jealousy, with all the citizens put on mourning. With his death the great age of Greek drama came to an end.

§ 6

Aristophanes, a contemporary of the tragic poets, was the supreme master of Greek comedy, which in his hands was a mixture of romanticism and topical jokes, the expression of a desire to get away in the manner, let us say, of Sir James Barrie from the pressure of the realities of the moment, combined with the high-spirited but effervescent buffoonery which nowadays is associated with the music-hall. Aristophanes may be compared with a modern writer of French revues. His plays are witty comments on the follies and foibles of his time.

Aristophanes was born in 448 B.C. Little is known of the details of his life, and of his fifty-four comedies only eleven have been preserved. Aristophanes was conservative, hating wars, democracy, and "intellectuals." He gibed at warmongers, demagogues, philosophers, and lawyers. In his gay moods he writes with a charm that, as has been well said, has a genuine Shakespearean flavour, as witness this Chorus from his comedy *The Frogs*. The translation is again by Mr. Gilbert Murray :

Then on 'mid the meadows deep,
Where thickets the rosebuds creep
  And the dewdrops are pearliest :
A jubilant step advance
In our own, our eternal dance,
Till its joy the Glad Fates entrance
  Who threaded it earliest.

For ours is the sunshine bright,
Yes, ours is the joy of light,
  All pure without danger :
For we thine Elect have been,
Thy secrets our eyes have seen,
And our hearts we have guarded clean
  Toward kinsman and stranger.

§ 7

The most interesting and important of the few remnants of Greek lyric poetry that have come down to us are the work of Sappho, the poetess, who lived on the island of Lesbos some hundred and fifty years before the time of the

Greek dramatists. She was held by the Greeks in as high regard as Homer himself, being variously referred to as the "Tenth Muse" and the "Flower of the Graces." Only one of her lyrics, the "Hymn to Aphrodite," exists in its entirety, but some fragments of her writing have been discovered in recent years written on Egyptian papyri. J. A. Symonds says that the world has suffered no greater loss than the loss of Sappho's poems. The Greek critics, who were lucky enough to read them, claimed every line as perfect, and the fragments that are left to us justify the assertion that Sappho's writing was distinguished by an absolutely inimitable grace. Two of her epigrams are preserved in the Greek Anthology. Here is one written for a fisherman's grave:

To Pelagon Meniscus gave
This oar and basket for his grave,
That those who pass his tomb might see
How small a fisher's wealth can be.

The Greek Anthology has a curious and interesting history. It was originally a collection of epigrams compiled about the year 200 B.C. The Greeks used to write verses on their temples and tombs and public buildings, and it was from these verses that the first Anthology was composed. Other collections of lyric poetry and later epigrams were made at various times from the year 60 B.C. until the sixth century A.D., when the whole of these compilations were published in seven books, which were revised and re-arranged by a Constantinople scholar in the tenth century. A copy of this last collection was discovered by chance in the Palatine Library at Heidelberg in the year 1606, and was presented to Pope Gregory the Fifteenth in 1623. It is still in the Vatican Library.

The verses, as J. A. Symonds has said, introduce us to the minutest facts of private life in Greece from the earliest classic times to the decadent days of the Eastern Empire. Many English poets have translated some or other of these exquisite verses. Perhaps the best-known translation is Shelley's version of Plato's epitaph for his friend Aster:

Thou wert the morning star among the living
Ere thy fair light had fled;
Now, having died, thou art as Hesperus giving
New splendour to the dead.



SAPPHO," BY SIR LAWRENCE ALMA-TADEMA, R.A.

The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece !
Where burning Sappho loved and sung.
BYRON.

Sappho and her pupils lived together on the Island of Lesbos.

§ 8

So far as prose writing is concerned, the things that mainly preoccupied the ancients were oratory, history, and philosophy. Demosthenes the Athenian was the most famous of all Greek orators. He was eager for a united Greece with Athens, not as a tyrant, but as a single-minded leader and inspirer. He opposed all hazardous adventures. He attacked corruption. In a dozen respects he proved himself a long-sighted cautious statesman. Always he pitted himself against Philip of Macedon, denouncing his plots against Hellenic liberty in the series of famous speeches known as the Philippics.

The Greek historians best known to us are Xenophon, a general turned war correspondent, Herodotus, and Thucydides. Herodotus, the " father of history," wrote just after Athenian civilisation had been delivered from the fear of the Persians. He was not content to describe the immediate forces which led to the great campaign which resulted in the Greek victories of Marathon and Salamis, but further back still into the history of Egypt, about which he could only guess.

Thucydides wrote after the great internal struggle in Greece which brought about the downfall of the Athenian Empire, and with its downfall the end of Greek classical literature. His history of the Peloponnesian War is conceived not so much as a record as a work of art. We get a picture of the triumph of Athens and her gradual leadership of a group of island states, of the rise to power and the unchallenged eminence of Pericles, and of all those elements in the policy of Pericles and of the city state which he ruled which were the seeds of future disaster.

The great Greek biographer, Plutarch, though writing in Greek, wrote under the Roman Empire and within the Christian era. His *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* had probably more influence on modern thought when the classics came to be studied again at the Renaissance than any other single book. In the translation by Sir Thomas North they were the source of Shakespeare's Roman plays. They gave the impulse to the practice of biography in England which began with the books we have just mentioned, and

they have been a constant inspiration to moralists and statesmen. Probably no book except the Bible had a stronger influence in England in Elizabethan times.

§ 9

The dominating figure in Athens at the end of the fifth century B.C. was the philosopher, Socrates, the son of a stonemason, and himself "a clumsy and slovenly figure." The dominating figures in the opening years of the fourth century were Plato, the pupil of Socrates, and Aristotle. Socrates was never able to write, and his teachings have been preserved in Plato's "Dialogues," though it remains doubtful how much of the philosophy is the master's and how much the pupil's. Plato lived to be eighty. Except for two visits to Sicily, where he endeavoured, with tragic failure, to put his political theories into practice, he lived his long life in Athens, teaching philosophy in the shaded portico of his Academy, which was pleasantly situated in a public park a mile outside the city gates. Among his pupils was Aristotle, afterwards the tutor of Alexander the Great, who in later years had his own school at Athens at the Lyceum. Aristotle was the father of modern science. But neither with Aristotle's science nor with the philosophy of Socrates and Plato is this OUTLINE concerned.

Plato was, however, also a great literary artist with the characteristic Greek love of beauty and of life. His writings consist of the early *Dialogues*, the *Republic*, the first description of Utopia ever written, and the *Laws*, in which he developed his political teaching.

The fundamental ideas of the *Republic*, the most famous of Plato's books, is that the good man can only exist in the good state. In Plato's time the old Greek devotion to the state, to service for the commonweal, had degenerated into self-seeking. Rulers had grown corrupt. Politicians thought only of the "spoils." And with corruption had come ignorance. The leaders of the people were blind and selfish. The first essential was that the rulers should be educated, properly prepared for their positions. Children should be taught to love beauty and hate ugliness, and to "recognise and welcome reason." And since beauty and

knowledge are the substance of God, the end of Plato's idea of education was the realisation of God and the service of man.

But even the educated may deteriorate. A youth may be trained for service only to become the slave of self-seeking. So for his governing class Plato proposed the abolition of the family and of private property, both calculated, he contended, to encourage exclusiveness and selfishness. Plato was a eugenist. The state was to regulate the association of the sexes, and to look after children immediately after birth. Mothers and fathers were not even to know their own children, lest favouritism and unequal treatment should prevail and all the children of each generation were to be brought up as brothers and sisters. It must be remembered that Plato was only thinking of the creation of an ideal ruling caste. He had no thought for the mass of the people, who were to be left with their own goods, their own families, and without his idealistic education. He was dreaming of a people's aristocracy. It should be added that the theories propounded in the *Republic* were severely criticised by Aristotle. They are far away from the tracts of modern socialism, and they are, to some extent, kin to the philosophy of Nietzsche.

Plato's quality as a writer is exhibited in his wonderful description of the death of Socrates in the *Phædo*. The old philosopher was, it will be remembered, condemned in the year 399 B.C. to drink a draught of deadly hemlock on the trumped-up charge that he had corrupted the youth of Athens. Plato says :

> Soon the jailer, who was the servant of the Eleven, entered and stood by him, saying : " To you, Socrates, whom I know to be the noblest and gentlest and best of all who ever came to this place, I will not impute the angry feelings of other men, who rage and swear at me when, in obedience to the authorities, I bid them drink the poison—indeed, I am sure that you will not be angry with me ; for others, as you are aware, and not I, are the guilty cause. And so fare you well, and try to bear lightly what must needs be ; you know my errand." Then bursting into tears he turned away and went out.
>
> Socrates looked at him and said : " I return your good wishes, and will do as you bid." Then turning to us, he said : " How charming the man is ! since I have been in prison he has always been coming to see me, and at times he would talk to me, and was as good as could be to me, and now see how generously he sorrows for me. But we must do as he says,

Crito; let the cup be brought, if the poison is prepared: if not, let the attendant prepare some."

"Yet," said Crito, "the sun is still upon the hilltops, and many a one has taken the draught late, and after the announcement has been made to him he has eaten and drunk, and indulged in sensual delights; do not hasten, then, there is still time."

Socrates said: "Yes, Crito, and they of whom you speak are right in doing thus, for they think that they will gain by the delay; but I am right in not doing thus, for I do not think that I should gain anything by drinking the poison a little later; I should be sparing and saving a life which is already gone: I could only laugh at myself for this. Please, then, to do as I say, and not refuse me."

Crito, when he heard this, made a sign to the servant, and the servant went in, and remained for some time, and then returned with the jailer carrying a cup of poison. Socrates said: "You, my good friend, who are experienced in these matters, shall give me directions how I am to proceed." The man answered: "You have only to walk about until your legs are heavy, and then to lie down, and the poison will act." At the same time he handed the cup to Socrates, who in the easiest and gentlest manner, without the least fear or change of colour or feature, looking at the man with all his eyes, Echecrates, as his manner was, took the cup and said: "What do you say about making a libation out of this cup to any god? May I, or not?" The man answered: "We only prepare, Socrates, just so much as we deem enough." "I understand," he said; "yet I may and must pray to the gods to prosper my journey from this to that other world—may this, then, which is my prayer, be granted to me." Then holding the cup to his lips, quite readily and cheerfully he drank off the poison. And hitherto most of us had been able to control our sorrow; but now when we saw him drinking, and saw too that he had finished the draught, we could no longer forbear, and in spite of myself my own tears were flowing fast; so that I covered my face and wept over myself, for certainly I was not weeping over him, but at the thought of my own calamity in having lost such a companion. Nor was I the first, for Crito, when he found himself unable to restrain his tears, had got up and moved away, and I followed; and at that moment, Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time, broke out in a loud cry which made cowards of us all. Socrates alone retained his calmness: "What is this strange outcry?" he said. "I sent away the women mainly in order that they might not offend in this way, for I have heard that a man should die in peace. Be quiet, then, and have patience."

When we heard that, we were ashamed, and refrained our tears; and he walked about until, as he said, his legs began to fail, and then he lay on his back, according to the directions, and the man who gave him the poison now and then looked at his feet and legs; and after a while he pressed his foot hard and asked him if he could feel; and he said, "No"; and then his leg, and so upwards and upwards, and showed us that he was cold and stiff. And he felt them himself, and said: "When the poison reaches the heart, that will be the end." He was beginning to grow cold about the groin, when he uncovered his face, for he had covered himself up, and said (they were his last words)—he said: "Crito, I owe a cock to

Asclepius; will you remember to pay the debt?" "The debt shall be paid," said Crito; "is there anything else?" There was no answer to this question; but in a minute or two a movement was heard, and the attendants uncovered him; his eyes were set, and Crito closed his eyes and mouth.

Such was the end, Echecrates, of our friend, whom I may truly call the wisest, and justest, and best of all the men whom I have ever known.

§ 10

No two peoples were ever more unlike than the Greeks and the Romans. The Greeks were essentially artists, loving beauty, caring for all that made the individual life dignified and happy. They were intellectually adventurous, inquisitive in speculation, and daring in the profession of their beliefs. The Romans, on the other hand, were eminently practical and unimaginative; their genius was for war and politics, and their chief concern was for order and commercial prosperity. Wherever the Roman armies went they carried law and built roads.

Contrasting his countrymen with the Greeks, Virgil summarised the work of the Romans when he wrote in the "Æneid":

> Others, belike, with happier grace
> From bronze or stone shall call the face,
> Plead doubtful causes, map the skies,
> And tell when planets set or rise;
> But, Roman, thou—do thou control
> The nations far and wide,
> Be this thy genius, to impose
> The rule of peace on vanquished foes,
> Show pity to the humbled soul,
> And crush the sons of pride.

The Romans had a genius for administration and colonisation, propitiating the peoples whom they conquered by the justice of their government and by their splendid scheme of recognising every man born in a province occupied by the Roman legions as a Roman citizen.

The history of Greece, so far as we know it, begins with a magnificent literary achievement. Homer was the first of the Greeks. But although we know what happened in Rome so long ago as the eighth century before Christ, there was no Roman literature until six hundred years later—

there was no Roman literature, indeed, until the Romans came into intimate contact with Greek civilisation. Early in the third century B.C., after the first war with Carthage, the Romans conquered the island of Sicily, which had been colonised by the Greeks centuries before. The evidence of Greek culture exists to this day in Sicily, and at Taormina and at Syracuse there are far more complete Greek theatres than there can be found anywhere in Greece itself. After the conquest of Sicily, Greek scholars and artists settled in Rome, and the Romans, then a rude people with no art, no literature, and with the baldest and most unimaginative of religions, were dazzled and fascinated by a culture of which they learned for the first time.

Latin literature began with the translation of the "Odyssey" in the third century B.C., and afterwards of the Greek tragedies by Greek slaves in the service of Roman masters. Again, under the influence of the Greeks, the Romans began to build theatres, imitating Athenian models, but building of wood instead of stone, and using the orchestra, where the Greek chorus was placed, for the seats of the senators and other important persons. The plays produced in these early Roman theatres were comedies based on the Greek, and often translations of the comic dramatists who followed Aristophanes in Athens.

The first important writer of Latin comedies was Plautus, whose writings belong to the end of the third century and the beginning of the second century B.C. He wrote in all a hundred and thirty plays, of which twenty are still in existence. They are strangely like modern French farces, the fun being derived from foolish fathers, spendthrift sons, jealous husbands, cunning slaves, and traffickers in all sorts of vice. Plautus was followed by Terence, who was born in Carthage, and brought to Rome as a slave. Nearly all the plays of Terence were adaptations from the Greek, and are instinct with the essentially Greek idea that conduct should be based on reason, and consideration should accompany authority. Terence died in 149 B.C. Subsequently Roman writers agreed in eulogising the purity of his Latin style.

The Romans were never able to write tragedy at all comparable with the magnificence of Æschylus, Sophocles,



*Photo : Anderson.*

"THE FATES," BY MICHAEL ANGELO.

Pitti Gallery, Florence.

The names of the Fates were Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos. The first spun the fates of men, the second apportioned them, and the third cut them off. They presided over birth as well as death, and the gods, as well as men, were subject to them. The note of Greek tragedy is that man is helpless in the hands of these Fates. This conception was borrowed to some extent by the Romans, to whom the Fates were also "lords above lords and gods behind gods."

and Euripides. Ennius, a contemporary of Terence, who is sometimes called the father of Roman poetry, boasted that the soul of Homer had migrated into him through a peacock. But there is no evidence in his epics or in his tragedies that this was a fact.

Roughly it may be said that there was no Latin literature of outstanding importance until the first century B.C. That was the Golden Age of Rome, so far as letters are concerned, as the fifth century B.C. was the Golden Age of Athens. It was the century of Cicero and Cæsar, Horace and Virgil, Livy, Ovid, Catullus, and Lucretius, the age in which nine-tenths of the Latin literature that has come down to us was produced. This century saw the end of the Republic and the beginning of the Empire. It was the time of Rome's greatest material prosperity and glory. Her legions had marched east and west, north and south, carrying their eagles into Asia, to the borders of the African desert, to the banks of the Danube, through Spain, Italy, and England. Rome was the first world-empire, and it was when Rome was at the very apex of her glory that her literature was produced. The same thing happened in Greece, for, as has already been shown, the Greek drama followed the Athenian defeat of the Persians.

§ 11

Virgil, who was born in 70 B.C. and died in 19 B.C., was the most patriotic of all Roman writers. He loved Italy as Shakespeare loved England. His father was a small farmer, and he was brought up in the country, retaining through his life a deep love of country life and the Spartan peasant virtues. His "Eclogues," a series of pastoral poems, were begun in his country home and finished in Rome when he was thirty-three. Seven years later he completed the "Georgics," in which, at the suggestion of Mæcenas, the Roman millionaire who loved to be the patron of poets, he described the year's work of the Italian farmer.

The "Georgics" is a poem of masterly beauty and finish. It is a glorification of the labour of the fields, but it is more than that. Virgil, the farmer's son, idealises the work of

husbandry with knowledge and sympathy, and Virgil, the nature-lover, revels in the varied splendour of the world. Sunshine and storm, summer stars and winter floods, comets and eclipses, all delight the poet, whose muse can also joy in peaceful scenes of crops and pasture lands. For wild animals he has a strong attraction, and it has been well said that for those who have lived close to nature, particularly in southern lands, no other book possesses the charm of the "Georgics."

Virgil's great poem the "Æneid" was finished in 19 B.C. He left instructions that the manuscript should be destroyed —it was his intention to devote three more years to polishing the poem—but his wish was overruled by order of the Emperor Augustus. In the "Æneid" Virgil set out to write a poem which should explain to the people of the time in which he lived their origin and the reasons for their existence. The "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" gave the Greek peoples all round the fringes of the Mediterranean a story of their origin which satisfied and even excited them. The Romans, who had gradually won political dominance over all the places where Greek legends were current, had themselves, except for the trivial story of Romulus and Remus symbolised for them by the bronze figure of the wolf in the Capitol, nothing in the past to which they could attach themselves.

Virgil provided Rome in the "Æneid," his Homeric epic, with a national story, beautifully told, full of the cultured excellences of a man using a language which had reached at the moment the pitch of literary perfection, and with just enough relation to the currently known legends of Greece as to win a polite, if not a sincere, acceptance from the readers of the time.

Æneas, the hero of the epic, is one of the Trojan heroes. After the capture of Troy by the Greeks, he makes a long seven years' voyage westward, eventually landing at Carthage on the north coast of Africa. The first lines of Dryden's translation of the "Æneid" indicate the heroic note of the poem:

> Arms and the man I sing, who, forc'd by fate,
> And haughty Juno's unrelenting hate,
> Expell'd and exil'd, left the Trojan shore.

Dido, the queen of Carthage, falls in love with Æneas, who tells her the story of the fall of Troy. In this story Virgil narrates, for the first time, the legend of the wooden horse, in which on the advice of the sage Nestor the Greeks hid themselves and thus contrived to enter the city.

Æneas is warned by the gods not to stay in Carthage, and he prepares secretly to depart. Dido discovers his intention, and when she finds that all her persuasion and cajolery cannot alter his purpose, she stabs herself with the hero's sword.

It is in the sixth book that Virgil links the Trojan with the city that the poet loved. Æneas lands on the western shore of Italy and hurries to the cavern of the Sibyl. He tells the prophetess that he is bound for Hades to see the face of his sire, Anchises, and with her as his guide he descends to the shadowy homes of the dead. "Now, man thyself, Æneas, and follow me."

They are ferried across the Styx by Charon, the gloomy ferryman, passing the realms of despair, haunted by phantoms and monsters, where Æneas sees many of the heroes of the Trojan War, and where he meets Queen Dido, hate burning unquenchable in her eyes. At last they reach Elysium, where Æneas's father reveals to him the future glory of his race. He bids him behold the spirits of his descendants, the Romans that are to be, "the breed of heroes" destined to return to earth to fill the world with their glory. Leaving the land of Spirits, Æneas arrives at the mouth of the Tiber. He is welcomed by Latinus, king of the Laurentines, whose daughter Æneas marries, and founds a fabled city—and thus the poet involves the mythical origin of Rome.

The charm of the "Æneid" lies in its deep reverence for the old gods, the old spirit, and the old glory of Rome. The characters themselves have little of the heroic attraction of Homer's creations, for Virgil generally lacked the gift of endowing his characters with vivid humanity. Dido is his greatest success. In the fourth book of the "Æneid" she is one of the most living and warm-blooded women in poetry, and her story is the first and one of the greatest pieces of romantic writing in the world. She appears to Æneas a vision of dignity and loveliness:

The beauteous Dido, with a num'rous train
And pomp of guards, ascends the sacred fane.
Such on Eurotas' banks, or Cynthus' height,
Diana seems; and so she charms the sight,
When in the dance the graceful goddess leads
The choir of nymphs, and overtops their heads:
Known by her quiver, and her lofty mien,
She walks majestic, and she looks their queen;
Latona sees her shine above the rest,
And feeds with secret joy her silent breast.
Such Dido was; with such becoming state,
Amidst the crowd, she walks serenely great.
Their labour to her future sway she speeds,
And passing with a gracious glance proceeds;
Then mounts the throne, high plac'd before the shrine:
In crowds around, the swarming people join.
She takes petitions, and dispenses laws,
Hears and determines every private cause:
Their tasks in equal portions she divides,
And where unequal, there by lots decides.

Virgil was buried at Naples. The poet was a tall, dark, handsome man, of a modest and gentle disposition, silent, diffident, and religious, living a quiet life, loving his friends and loving his country. No great writer has ever been held in deeper affection by his contemporaries, and his fame in his own country and his own time has never been dimmed. The scholars of the Middle Ages knew his writings as they knew the Bible and the copious writings of the Fathers of the Church. The Renaissance gave him an even wider appreciation. When Shakespeare made Jessica say:

On such a night as this
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
Upon the sad sea banks and waved her love
To come again to Carthage,

he was writing in a spirit steeped in Virgilian influence. A part of the permanence of Virgil's influence (though this would not have affected Shakespeare) was due to a misunderstanding of one of his poems. In the fourth section of the "Eclogues" there is a passage widely taken by the early Christians to be a prophecy on the part of the poet of the birth of Christ:

Come are those last days that the Sibyl sang:
The ages' mighty march begins anew.

Now comes the virgin, Saturn reigns again:
Now from high heaven descends a wondrous race.
Thou on the newborn babe—who first shall end
That age of iron, bid a golden dawn
Upon the broad world—chaste Lucina, smile:
. . . . . .
On thee, child, everywhere shall earth, untilled,
Show'r, her first baby-offerings, vagrant stems
Of ivy, foxglove, and gay briar, and bean;
Unbid, the goats shall come big-uddered home,
Nor monstrous lions scare the herded kine.
Thy cradle shall be full of pretty flowers:
Die must the serpent, treacherous poison-plants
Must die; and Syria's roses spring like weeds.

Virgil became then, in a sense, one of the forerunners of the Christian religion, and the honour which was paid to him in this respect remains for ever in the circumstance that Dante in "The Divine Comedy" made Virgil his guide through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven.

§ 12

Quintus Horatius Flaccus—universally named as Horace—of all the Roman classics is the most loved and quoted. He is the most companionable. When Voltaire called him the best of preachers, he meant that he preached not from a pulpit but in the friendliest way at your shoulder. It has been said of him, "He probed every wound with so gentle a hand that the patient smiled under the operation."

He is the best fellow to go a walk with, unfailing in hours of vacancy or discomfort, always ready to give you a felicitous phrase or a flash of tender wit to carry off your mood. It is not his part to exalt the deeds of heroes, as did Virgil, or to unfold the mysteries of the Universe like Lucretius, or to "treat of Fate, and Chance, and change in human life," in the ways of the Greek tragedians; he is the tactful and intimate adviser who puts in his word when he sees it will be helpful. As Pope has it:

Horace still charms with graceful negligence
And without method talks us into sense,
Will, like a friend, familiarly convey
The truest notions in the easiest way

Ruskin, writing to an inquirer on Bible-reading, boldly said: "The best message for any of your young men who really are trying to read their Bibles is—whatever they first chance to read, on any morning. But here's a Pagan passage for them, which will be a grandly harmonised bass for them for whatsoever words they get on the New Year." The passage he referred to was Horace's in his Epistle to Albius Tibullus, which Conington renders:

> Let hopes and sorrows, fears and angers be,
> And think each day that dawns the last you'll see;
> For so the hour that greets you unforeseen
> Will bring with it enjoyment twice as keen.

Horace died just eight years before the Christian era. He was sprung from the people. His father, indeed, had been a slave, and as a freedman he rose no higher than to be a kind of commission agent at auctions. Yet to him Horace owed everything. After leaving school in Rome he finished his education at Athens, and was there when the news came of the assassination of Julius Cæsar. When Brutus and Cassius arrived to take command of the Roman provinces in the East, Horace and his fellow-students were swept into the campaign which failed at Philippi. Although then only twenty-two he impressed Brutus and received the command of a legion. But this episode was foreign to his character and career. It must have advanced him socially, however, when, on returning to Rome under the amnesty proclaimed by Octavius, he became a civil servant. He began to make distinguished friends, and his career was established when Virgil introduced him to the wealthy and cultured Mæcenas, the friend and chief adviser of Augustus, whose name is synonymous with generous patronage of men of letters. In the train of Mæcenas he went to Brundusium, the modern Brindisi, and his account of the journey is one of the most natural and vivid glimpses of Roman life and habits that we possess. It contains also a delightful reference to his meeting with his friend and fellow-poet, Virgil:

> What hand-shaking! While sense abides,
> A friend to me is worth the world besides.

Although he had fought for the Republican party, he

gained the complete confidence of his new friends, and when Mæcenas presented to him a small estate in the valley of Ustica it was accepted by him with manly grace and gratitude. There is no more famous gift in literary history.

In this Sabine retreat—the little farm thirty miles from Rome, his own to enjoy—Horace fulfilled his dream of poetic retirement. Here he lived the simple life, watched the Roman world go by, invoked the Muse, cultivated his fields, and had his friends to spend a few days with him as often as he could persuade them to turn their backs on the smoke, noise, and vices of Rome. And these friends, who included great soldiers, courtiers, men of affairs, and many humbler folk, loved Horace for his friendly candour about the lives they were living and the ambitions that were costing them so much in health and peace of mind.

In counselling them he counsels us all. His gospel is that of self-restraint, reasonable ambitions, contentment, and the enjoyment of life from day to day. Is his young friend, Licinius Murena, becoming giddy with success, and eager for violent political acts? Horace, in one of his most famous odes, counsels him (the translation is by Sir Stephen E. De Vere):

> Tempt not the deep; nor while you fly
> The storm, Licinius, steer too nigh
> The breakers on the rocky shore;
> Hold fast, contented evermore,
> The way of Peace, the Golden Mean:
> That bounded space which lies between
> The sordid hut and palace hall.

He is always trying to abate the "will to live" in his friends when he sees that it is controlling them instead of being controlled. He pleads with his patron Mæcenas to leave the joyless feasts of Rome, and its sweltering heat, for the peace and coolness of the country:

> Happy the man, and he alone,
> Who master of himself can say,
> To-day at least hath been my own,
> For I have clearly liv'd to-day:
> Then let to-morrow's clouds arise,
> Or purer suns o'erspread the cheerful skies.
>
> PHILIP FRANCIS.

Horace's touch is so light, and his address so intimate, that he can warn a friend in the height of his prosperity that he will have to die and leave all. He does this repeatedly, as in the deathless ode to Postumus ("Ehue fugaces Postume, Postume"):

In vain shall we war's bloody conflict shun,
And the hoarse scudding gale
Of Adriatic seas,
Or fly the southern breeze,
That through the Autumn hours wafts pestilence and bale.

For all must view Cocytus' pitchy tide
Meandering slow, and see
The accursed Danaids' moil,
And that dread stone recoil,
Sad Sisyphus is doomed to heave eternally.

Land, home, and winsome wife must all be left;
And cypresses abhorred,
Alone of all the trees
That now your fancy please,
Shall shade his dust, who was a little while their lord.

SIR THEODORE MARTIN.

Such exhortations are but the foil to his delightful, if very pagan, calls to love and wine and roses, and his rallyings of coquettes like Lydia, Pyrrha, Chloe, Glycera, Lyde, and the rest. In this vein nothing is more dainty than his counsel to the too anxious Leuconoé, who had been dabbling in the occult—trying to learn her destiny from Babylonish oracles. He advises her, as he advises every young woman still, to avoid all such nonsense:

Far wiser is it to endure
Those ills of life we cannot cure.
What though this winter, that exhausts
The Tyrrhene surge on shattered coasts,
Should be the last for thee and me?
It matters not, Leuconoé!
Fill high the goblet! Envious Time
Steals, as we speak, our fleeting prime.
Away with hope! Away with sorrow!
Snatch thou To-day, nor trust To-morrow.

SIR STEPHEN E. DE VERE.

Countless modern poets have exhausted their art in trying to give the spirit of these effusions in English verse

but though much can be done the essence flies. Milton did wonders with the famous ode to Pyrrha (" Quis multa gracilis te puer in rosa ") in his rendering, which begins :

> What slender youth bedew'd with liquid odours
> Courts thee on roses in some pleasant cave,
> Pyrrha ? for whom bind'st thou
> In wreaths thy golden hair,
> Plain in thy neatness ?

It has been suggested that Horace uttered commonplaces. He did, but they are the commonplaces which every generation needs, and he gave them lyric forms so perfect that these have been handed down through nearly two thousand years of change and tumult. It may be hinted that his philosophy is that of running away from life. It is far more just to say that it teaches us not to let life run away with our best selves, and our real capacities to enjoy and improve it. He can exhort in terms which lack nothing of grave stimulus, as in his words to Lollius :

> Unless you light your early lamp, to find
> A moral book ; unless you form your mind
> To noble studies, you shall forfeit rest,
> And love or envy shall distract your breast.
> For the hurt eye an instant cure you find :
> Then why neglect, for years, the sickening mind ?
> Dare to be wise ; begin, for, once begun,
> Your task is easy ; half the work is done.
> And sure the man, who has it in his power
> To practise virtue, and protracts the hour,
> Waits like the rustic, till the river dried :
> Still glides the river and will ever glide.
>
> PHILIP FRANCIS.

Not the greatest of the Roman poets, but none is more secure of immortality than Horace. And it is pleasant to know that, like other poets, though with truer prevision, he was convinced that his songs would live. In one of his odes to Mæcenas he flings self-doubt aside and joyously announces (we quote Sir Theodore Martin's version) :

> Though cradled at a poor man's hearth,
> His offspring, I shall not
> Go down to mix with common earth,
> Forgetting and forgot.

§ 13

Apart from the heroic poetry of Virgil and the lyrics of Horace, there are three other forms of Roman poetry. There is the great philosophic poem of Lucretius, "On the Nature of Things," written in the early part of the first century B.C. Secondly, there is what may be called the society verse of Ovid, a contemporary of Virgil and a pleasure-loving artist whose resolve to keep outside the political turmoil of his day did not prevent his being banished to a town on the banks of the Black Sea far away from the colour and gaiety of Rome. In his "Metamorphoses" Ovid retells many of the ancient Greek myths.

Finally, there were the satirists of whom the most eminent was Juvenal, a much later poet, who has left us a bitter picture of Rome under the Emperors, when the old patriotic spirit had disappeared, when wealth had elbowed worth out of all positions of eminence, when the parvenu flourished, and vice and vulgarity were rampant.

Juvenal, who was translated by Dryden and imitated by Dr. Johnson, did not mince words in his denunciations:

> Who would not, reckless of the swarm he meets,
> Fill his wide tablets, in the public streets,
> With angry verse? when, through the mid-day glare,
> Borne by six slaves, and in an open chair,
> The forger comes, who owes this blaze of state
> To a wet seal, and a fictitious date;
> Comes like the soft Mæcenas, lolling by,
> And impudently braves the public eye!
> Or the rich dame, who stanched her husband's thirst
> With generous wine, but drugged it deeply first!
> And now, more dexterous than Locusta, shows
> Her country friends the beverage to compose,
> And, midst the curses of the indignant throng,
> Bears, in broad day, the spotted corpse along.

§ 14

Catullus was born at Verona about the year 87 B.C. His father, Valerius, a wealthy man, was a friend of Julius Cæsar. Catullus, not having to depend upon a patron, wrote to please himself and his friends—especially his lady-friends, of

whom the chief was Lesbia, upon whose pet sparrow he wrote poems which have been the envy and despair of light versifiers ever since his day. No poet was ever so many-sided. He was one of the most witty of men ; his pathos, as displayed in the elegy on his brother, rings deep and true ; his love-songs are the finest in all antiquity ; his style is as rich in colouring as the best of Keats. It may indeed be said as truly of Catullus as of Goldsmith, that he touched nothing which he did not adorn.

§ 15

Cicero, the most famous of all the Latin prose-writers, was born in 106 B.C. He was a busy lawyer-politician, whose life was spent amid the intrigues of Roman politics at the epoch when the Republic was destroyed and the Empire began. He was a man of easy-going disposition, who always found it difficult to be rancorous, who forgave his enemies easily, and was often on the most friendly terms with the bitter foes of yesterday. Such a man must inevitably be an inconstant politician, but despite his admiration for Julius Cæsar, Cicero was an honest republican. And, though he was a man of somewhat fearful mind, he had courage enough at the end of his life vehemently to denounce Mark Antony just after he, with Octavius, had entered Rome after defeating Brutus and Cassius at Philippi. Antony vowed vengeance, and a few days later Cicero was murdered by Popilius Lænus, who sent the head and hands of the orator to Antony, who nailed them to the front of the rostrum from which Cicero had made many of his famous speeches.

During his life, Cicero held many important public offices, but he survives more by the speeches that he made in the law courts than by his political orations. Many of these speeches are instinct with excitement and interest, and can be read to-day almost as if they had just been addressed to a jury at the Old Bailey.

Sometimes Cicero, like Burke and other modern orators, was not above writing a speech which purported to be delivered and never was. A man called Milo killed a famous and disreputable Roman named Clodius in an inn on the

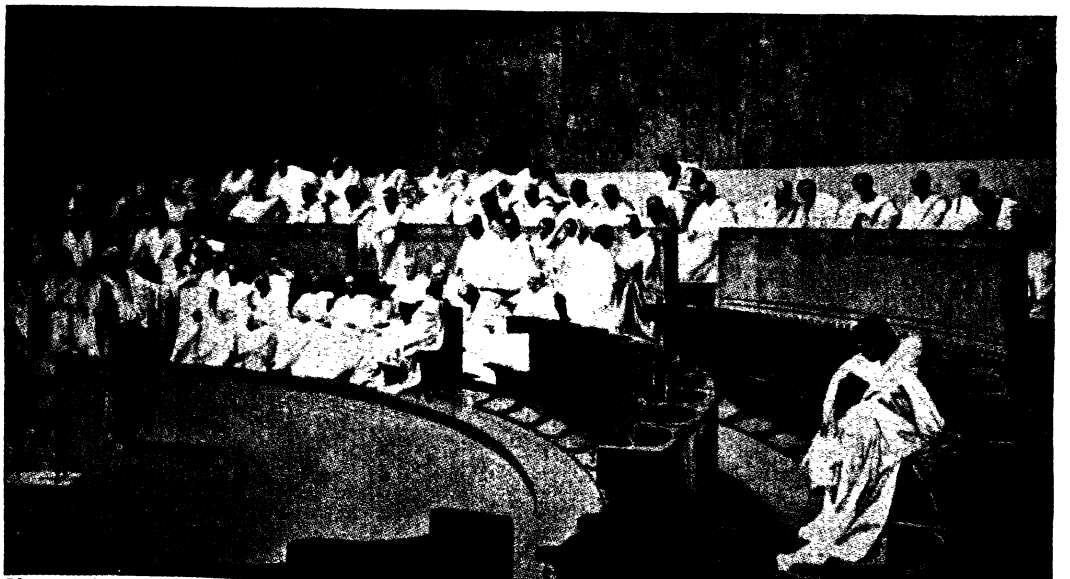


*Photo : Anderson.*

CICERO DENOUNCES CATILINE.

From the painting by Maccari, Rome.

Cicero reached the height of his career as an orator with his famous denunciation of Catiline before the Roman Senate. The charge of treason failed for want of evidence. Catiline vowed vengeance against his accuser, and Cicero's later years were shadowed by the fear of assassination. In the end he was killed by a creature of Antony, whom he had also denounced.

Appian Way. He was arrested and tried for the offence, and just as if a wealthy man to-day killed somebody at Richmond and had the money to pay for the defence, he briefed Cicero as the leading defending counsel of the time. Cicero had many great qualities, but courage was not one of them. When he went to the Court to plead for his client he found it full of troops, lost his nerve, and was unable to say more than a few broken words. The prisoner was sentenced to banishment, and one day some weeks afterwards, when he was sitting at Marseilles, he received a letter from his defending counsel enclosing the speech *Pro Milone*, which is probably the most familiar work of Cicero to schoolboys. The convict who was its subject-matter liked it so well that he wrote a letter back to the barrister, saying: "I am glad that you did not deliver that speech, because if you had I should have got off, and I should not be eating this excellent mullet on which I am now lunching."

In addition to his speeches Cicero wrote philosophical treatises and a series of letters which, like Alexander Pope, he evidently anticipated would be published. These letters throw an astonishing flood of light on the life of Rome at the end of the Republic; and it is largely to them that we owe our intimate knowledge of the Imperial City at the beginning of the Christian era. The vehemence of Cicero's oratory may be appreciated from the peroration of his arraignment of Mark Antony, to which reference has already been made.

"Are you in any respect to be compared with Cæsar? He had capacity, sense, memory, learning, foresight, reflection, and spirit. His warlike achievements, though ruinous to his country, were glorious to himself. Through inexpressible toil, through numberless dangers, he laid a scheme for a long possession of power. What he projected he perfected. With presents, with shows, with largesses, with entertainments, he soothed the thoughtless vulgar: by his liberality he obliged his friends; and by a semblance of clemency, his enemies. In short, partly by fear and partly by patience, he made the habit of slavery tolerable to a free State.

"The lust of power, I own, was, indeed, common to

you both ; though in no other respect can you admit of a comparison with him. But from all the misfortunes inflicted by him upon his country, this advantage accrued, that the people of Rome have learned how far any man is to be believed ; they have learned whom to trust, and of whom to beware. But this gives you no concern ; nor do you conceive what it is for brave men to have now learned how amiable in itself, how agreeable in the consequences, and how glorious it is in report, to kill a tyrant. If they could not bear with a Cæsar, will they endure Antony ?

" Believe me, the world will henceforward eagerly rush upon such an enterprise ; nor will they need ever wait long for an opportunity. Cast a considering eye, Mark Antony, at last upon your country. Reflect not on those with whom you live, but on those from whom you are descended. However you may stand with me, yet reconcile yourself to your country. But of this you are the best judge. One thing on my own part I will here openly declare : In my youth I defended my country ; in my old age I will not abandon her. The sword of Catiline I despised, and never shall I dread yours. With pleasure should I expose my person if by my blood the liberties of Rome could be immediately recovered, and the people of Rome delivered from that painful burden they have been so long in labour of. For if almost twenty years ago, in this very temple, I declared that no death could be untimely to me when Consular ; much more truly can I declare the same now, when I am an aged man. To me, Conscript Fathers, death is even desirable, now I have performed all the duties which my station and character required. Two things only I have now to wish for : The first (than which the gods themselves can bestow nothing on me more grateful) is, that I may leave Rome in the enjoyment of her liberty ; the other, that the reward of every man be proportioned to what he has deserved of his country."

It is little wonder that after listening to this splendid eloquence, the ruthless lover of Cleopatra should have determined that Cicero should live no longer and denounce no more.

§ 16

Of all Latin books, Cæsar's *Commentaries* are most widely read in the modern world. No schoolboy can escape them. They were composed from the dispatches that he sent to the Senate at Rome during his campaigns in Gaul, and they may be compared to the dispatches written by a modern general with a literary gift like Sir Ian Hamilton. One outstanding characteristic of Cæsar was his constant care for the welfare of the common soldier.

The two most famous of the Roman historians were Livy, who was born in 59 B.C. and died in A.D. 17, and Tacitus, who lived in the first years of the Christian era. To Livy we owe the stories of the early Roman kings, of the foundation of the Roman Republic, and of the painful and sanguinary struggles by which the troubled community of Rome and its surrounding towns and villages became the controller of the Mediterranean. The parts of Livy which are generally read in the course of the ordinary English education are those which deal with the great conflict between Rome and the Semitic power on the other side of the Mediterranean at Carthage. The Carthaginians, scattered as they were by conquest, left no surviving literature, though they themselves probably survive as the bulk of the Jewish races dispersed over the world to-day. The story as told in Livy is, therefore, a one-sided story, but it is of interest because for the first time in classical literature one can trace an author's writing to its source. Most of his material he owes to an historian called Polybius, who wrote in Greek and who, living nearer than Livy to the time of the Punic wars, was able to obtain details which gave his account an importance not possessed by that of Livy himself.

The works of Tacitus deal with events either within the historian's own recollection or sufficiently near for him to have had trustworthy sources of information. They show a capacity for the study of character, great narrative gifts of compression and point, and a desire to use history as a means of instruction and warning to the politicians and peoples of the future. The strength of the writing of Tacitus lies in the irony and brilliance of his own comments on the emperors and statesmen with whom he deals.

Possessing a mental temperament which was naturally bitter and biting, he forged a Latin style for his own use utterly unlike that of any other Roman prose-writer. His pages overflow with epigram and with the efficient exercise of a kind of humourless wit.

Tacitus has other claims than those of his annals and histories for the attention of students of literature. He was the first Roman writer, or at any rate the first whose works have remained, to write a biography, and his life of his uncle, the Roman General Agricola, who spent most of his active military career in Britain, is the earliest piece of biographical writing we have. Nothing is more strange in the history of literature than the fact that the interest in the writing of men's lives appears late in every country—except among the Jews. The fashion, however, soon spread in Rome. There are Suetonius's *Lives of the Cæsars*, which filled in many tragic and sensational details in the more sober stories of their reigns as told by Tacitus. Above all, there is the work of Plutarch, who, though writing in Greek, wrote under the Roman Empire.

§ 17

The Golden Age of Latin literature, the first half of which coincided with the last years of the Republic, continued through the reign of Augustus down to about A.D. 17. The Silver Age came to an end with the death of Juvenal in A.D. 120. In addition to Tacitus and Juvenal the writers of the Silver Age included Suetonius, to whom passing reference has already been made; Seneca, the philosopher and tutor of Nero; and Martial, the epigrammist, who was described by a contemporary as "a man of talent, acuteness, and spirit, with plenty of wit and gall, and sincere as he was witty."

With the decadence of the Roman Empire came the decadence of Latin literature. The writing of poetry ceased, and the history of classical literature comes to an end with *The Golden Ass* of Lucius Apuleius, who was born in Africa, and after a grand tour of the Roman world married a rich widow, and was thus able to devote himself to literature. *The Golden Ass* is among the earliest novels ever written. It is a fictional autobiography in which the author

describes how he was tried and condemned for the murder of three leathern bottles. He was brought back to life by a sorceress, whom he wished to follow in the shape of a bird, but owing to some mistake he was transformed instead into an ass. In his search for the rose-leaves that alone could give him back his human form, he had many strange adventures. He was bullied by his own horse and beaten by his own groom. He heard exactly what his friends thought of him, and had other fantastic experiences. The whole thing is amazingly interesting and often licentious. Boccaccio, Cervantes, and Le Sage borrowed incidents from *The Golden Ass*, and it was translated into English by William Adlington in 1566.

The *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius was almost the last literary achievement of the Roman Empire. Marcus Aurelius was a Roman emperor, his rule starting in A.D. 161, but it is interesting to note that he wrote in Greek. He was a man of noble character, intent on living a good life and fulfilling his obligations to his people. There were three persecutions of the Christians during his reign, but it must be remembered that in the Roman Empire of the second century the Christians were regarded with exactly the same popular dislike as the Jews were regarded in Tsarist Russia. The power of the Emperor was limited; he was always fearful of exciting widespread public disapproval, and, moreover, it is certain that Marcus Aurelius knew nothing of Christian ethics and doctrines. To him the Christians were merely enemies of the people.

The *Meditations* are a record of the Emperor's daily reflections on life and the nature of man, and are a perfect expression of Stoic philosophy. This philosophy is similar to that of Epictetus, a Greek slave belonging to one of Nero's courtiers, lame, in weak health, his life spent in poverty and obscurity. Slave and Emperor agreed in insisting that Virtue was its own reward, that man was helpless in the hands of God, and that whatever God did was right. The teaching of the *Meditations* is summarised in the following text from Epictetus:

> Remember that you are an actor in a drama, of such a kind as the author pleases to make it. If short, of a short one; if long, of a long one. If it be his pleasure you should act a poor man, a cripple, a governor, or a private person, see that you act it naturally. For this is your business, to act well the character assigned you; to choose it, is another's.

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Messrs. Macmillan publish excellent editions of Plato's *Republic* and *The Trial and Death of Socrates* in their Golden Treasury Series.

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# VIII

# THE MIDDLE AGES

## § 1

### IN DARKEST EUROPE

THE Middle Ages is the name commonly given to that period of European history that lasted from the sack and capture of Rome in A.D. 410, by the Visigoths under Alaric, to the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. Even before the passing of the Roman Empire of the West, there had been for over two hundred years a period of stagnation in which little, if any, literature was produced. Rome was, for years, fighting a losing battle against the barbarian hordes who had crossed the old imperial frontier of the Rhine and the Danube, the most terrible of these hordes being the Huns under the leadership of Attila. The whole fabric of Roman civilisation was gradually overwhelmed by the armies of the ignorant, and was apparently, but only apparently, lost for ever.

The new masters of the West cared nothing for culture, and for the most part they could neither read nor write. In the centuries that followed, Europe saw the gradual creation of nationalities and distinctive national life, by the amalgamation of races, and after persistent struggles between rival kings and chieftains. England was invaded by Angles and Saxons, by Danes, and by Normans, who although they came from France were the descendants of Scandinavian pirates. France was overrun by Franks, a Teuton people, and by Normans; and the Norman knights established their rule as far south as the island of Sicily.

For a thousand years Europe was the scene of constant war, pestilence, and famine, the sole protection that the common people had against the reckless and ruthless tyranny of barons and overlords being the steadily increasing

power of the Church. In such a time of unexampled turmoil it was impossible for any literature to be produced. The learning that had been born in Greece and nurtured in Rome was neglected and despised by the rude fighting chieftains, but the great books produced by the ancient world were not entirely lost. Copies were carefully preserved and recopied in the monasteries of the Benedictine monks, who alone cherished the remains of Roman civilisation. St. Benedict was born in 480, and was one of the brilliant lights of the Dark Ages. The monks who obeyed his rule were ordered to read and study. Longfellow says of St. Benedict in his "Monte Cassio":

> He founded here his Convent and his Rule
> Of prayer and work, and counted work as prayer;
> The pen became a clarion, and his school
> Flamed like a beacon in the midnight air.

In Ireland and certain parts of England, countries which suffered less than the continent of Europe from the mediæval ravages, the old learning survived when it was practically lost everywhere else—everywhere else in Europe, that is to say, except in Spain, which was invaded by the Arabs in 709, and remained for nearly eight hundred years wholly or partially under Moslem rule. The Arabs had come into contact with Greek culture when they overran Egypt, and while Christian Europe was wrapped in ignorance they established schools and academies at Damascus, Bagdad, Cairo, and Cordova in Spain, where Aristotle, Plato, and Euclid were studied side by side with the Koran. In the latter half of the Middle Ages the French or English scholar eager for real knowledge made his way to Cordova, Toledo, or Seville to learn from Jewish or Moorish professors, and it is said that in the thirteenth century St. Thomas Aquinas was taught Greek and enabled to read Aristotle by a Moor from one of the Spanish universities. In the last three years of his life the "angelic Doctor," as Aquinas was styled, wrote his *Summa Theologica*, which is still accepted as the final authoritative exposition of the Roman doctrine. A tremendous and enduring masterpiece of the human mind, it is to Christian philosophy what Dante's vast poem is to Christian poetry!

There were beacon lights even in the darkest times: individual scholars like the Venerable Bede, a monk of Northumberland, who wrote a history of the Anglo-Saxons in the eighth century, and great popular movements like the Crusades. The soul of Europe began to awaken when Peter the Hermit preached the First Crusade in France and Germany, and "the common people heard him gladly." The Dark Ages, indeed, came to an end long before the close of the Middle Ages. In the thirteenth century Roger Bacon, a Franciscan monk, of Oxford, urged men not to accept dogma and authority without question and to experiment for themselves, and in many respects he anticipated the discoveries of modern times. And in the same century Dante was born. St. Augustine stands at the threshold of the Middle Ages, which are dominated at their close by the sublime figure of the great Italian poet.

St. Jerome, a contemporary of St. Augustine, was the greatest Christian scholar during the last years of the Roman Empire. St. Jerome, indeed, was a scholar before he was a Christian. He was familiar with the classic writers, and the style of the Scriptures seemed to him rough and uncouth. Christ reproached him in a dream for preferring to be a Ciceronian than a Christian, and he resolved to devote the rest of his life to the study of the sacred books. The result was his famous translation of the Bible into Latin. With the help of Jewish scholars he translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew. He translated part of the Apocrypha from Chaldee and the New Testament, of course, from Greek. St. Jerome's version, known as the Vulgate, is still to the Roman Catholic Church the authorised version of the Scriptures, though it was considerably changed in later ages. St. Jerome died in 420. He was a voluminous writer and a man of most difficult temper, "always preferring an opinion to a friend."

## § 2

### ST. AUGUSTINE

St. Augustine was born in 354. The capture of Rome by Alaric in 410 inspired his *The City of God*, in which he

declared: "The greatest city of the world has fallen in ruin, but the City of God abideth for ever." St. Augustine lives in literary history mainly as the author of the *Confessions*, which have a human interest equal to that of the self-revelations of Bunyan and Rousseau. St. Augustine was born at a village in North Africa. His father was a pagan, his mother, Monica, a devout Christian. He was educated at Carthage, and afterwards became a professor of literature and oratory. He lived the ordinary life of a well-educated and well-to-do young man of the times, afterwards recalling the sins of his youth with the same bitter exaggeration that one finds in Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*. For years he tried to find rest and explanation in the various ancient philosophical systems, finally becoming a convert to Christianity in Milan, where he had been appointed to the chair of rhetoric. His mother had come from Africa to join him, and after his baptism they started to return to Africa, Augustine intending to lead a life of ascetic devotion. They stayed for a night or two at Ostia, the port of Rome, and here Monica fell ill and died.

The relations between mother and son have remained a treasure of the Church. Augustine wrote of his mother's "slavery" to him, declaring that she was "twice my mother: in the flesh that I might be born into earthly light, in heart that I might be born into light eternal." After his mother's death, St. Augustine stayed for a year in Rome, and then returned home, soon to be appointed Bishop of Hippo.

He was the most voluminous writer of his time, being the author, it is said, of no fewer than 230 books, in addition to innumerable homilies.

Augustine was an artist as well as a saint. He loved beauty, he joyed in music, and, indeed, he frequently accuses himself of being too much affected by æsthetic pleasure. His *Confessions* are obviously sincere. Their human value lies in the fact that they are an unvarnished picture of the inner life of a very real man. St. Augustine remains the most authoritative of all the Fathers of the Church, and there is a wider interest in him for, ascetic though he was, he was also a man. He says:

**There were other things which in them did more take my mind; to**

talk and jest together, to do kind offices by turns; to read together honied books; to play the fool or be earnest together; to dissent at times without discontent, as a man might with his own self; and even with the seldomness of these dissentings, to season our more frequent consentings; sometimes to teach, and sometimes learn; long for the absent with impatience; and welcome the coming with joy. These and the like expressions, proceeding out of the hearts of those that loved and were loved again, by the countenance, the tongue, the eyes, and a thousand pleasing gestures, were so much fuel to melt our souls together, and out of many make but one.

This is it that is loved in friends; and so loved, that a man's conscience condemns itself, if he love not him that loves him again, or love not again him that loves him, looking for nothing from his person, but indications of his love. Hence that mourning, if one die, and darkening of sorrows, that steeping of the heart in tears, all sweetness turned to bitterness; and upon the loss of life of the dying, the death of the living.

The *Confessions* abound in vivid imagery, and with phrases that have passed into all European languages, such as, " the biter bit," and " life of my life."

The literary tradition founded in the Church by St. Jerome and St. Augustine was never quite lost. Reference has already been made to St. Benedict, who, a hundred years after St. Augustine's death, taught his monks to study and to preserve and copy the ancient manuscripts. St. Columba, the Apostle of Caledonia, was another literary monk of the early Middle Ages. In his *Books and their Makers in the Middle Ages*, Mr. George Haven Putnam says:

According to one of the stories, Columba journeyed to Ossory in the south-west to visit a holy and very learned recluse, a doctor of laws and philosophy, named Longarad. Columba asked leave to examine the doctor's books, and when the old man refused, the monk burst out in an imprecation: " May thy books no longer do thee any good, neither to them who come after thee, since thou takest occasion by them to show thine inhospitality." The curse was heard, and after Longarad died, his books became unintelligible. An author of the sixth century says that the books still existed, but that no man could read them.

Another story speaks of Columba's undertaking, while visiting his ancient master Finnian, to make a clandestine and hurried copy of the abbot's Psalter. He shut himself up at night in the church where the Psalter was deposited, and the light needed for his nocturnal work radiated from his left hand while he wrote with the right. A curious wanderer, passing the church, was attracted by the singular light, and looked in through the keyhole, and while his face was pressed against the door his eye was suddenly torn out by a crane which was roosting in the church.

The wanderer went with his story to the abbot, and Finnian, indignant at what he considered to be a theft, claimed from Columba the copy which the monk had prepared, contending that a copy made without permission ought to belong to the owner of the original, on the ground that the transcript is the offspring of the original work. As far as I have been able to ascertain, this is the first instance which occurs in the history of European literature of a contention for copyright. Columba refused to give up his manuscript, and the question was referred to King Diarmid, or Dermott, in the palace of Tara. The King's judgment was given in a rustic phrase which has passed into a proverb in Ireland: "To every cow her calf, and consequently to every book its copy."

Despite the enthusiasm of scholarly churchmen, after the death of St. Augustine there was no outstanding event in literary history for seven hundred years.

## § 3

### THE *NIBELUNGEN LIED*

The German "Iliad"—the *Nibelungen Lied*—is the treasure-house in which Wagner found the stories of his music-dramas.

A twelfth-century German poet, whose name is unknown, gathered together the primitive hero-stories of the Northern peoples, sung round camp fires probably long before the art of writing was known, just as centuries before Homer had collected the myths and legends of the ancient Greeks. The unnamed poet called his stories the *Nibelungen Lied*, the Songs of the People of Darkness, and these folk-stories are still regarded by the Germans with the same veneration as the Greeks had for the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey." Just as the Homeric stories were the subjects of the great Greek tragedies, so the *Nibelungen Lied* finds a permanent place in modern art in Wagner's music-dramas.

The story of the *Nibelungen Lied* is told in thirty-nine adventures. It begins with the coming of the hero Siegfried, the son of Siegmund, King of the Netherland, to Worms to woo the peerless beauty Kriemhild, the sister of King Günther of Burgundy.

Now this Siegfried had had strange adventures in his youth, when he had been apprenticed to a sword-smith.

He had slain a dragon and bathed in its blood, so that he was completely invulnerable, save where a leaf of the linden had stuck between his shoulders during the bathing. This was his Achilles heel. He had also acquired the sword Balmung, of wondrous potency, a Tarnkappe or cloak of invisibility which also gave him the strength of twelve strong men, a divining rod which gave him power over everyone, and, lastly, the Hoard of the Nibelungs (a mythical mass of gold and precious stones) and, with it, the overlordship of the Dwarf Alberich and all his myrmidons.

So when King Günther decides to voyage to Isenland and win for himself, if that may be, the beautiful but wayward Queen Brunhild, Siegfried goes with him in the guise of his vassal on the understanding that he is to have Kriemhild to wife if he helps Günther to achieve the perilous adventure. This Brunhild, as we know from the more primitive form of the Siegfried story used in Wagner's operas, is really a Valkyr or warrior, whose vocation it is to lead the pagan heroes from their last battlefield into Valhalla, and she could only give herself in love to a mortal at the cost of her immortality. In the later, milder version presented in the "lay," she is a maiden of flesh-and-blood with certain preternatural gifts, and he who would wed her must beat her at hurling the spear, leaping, and throwing the stone.

With the help of Siegfried in his cloak of invisibility and with his strength multiplied by wearing it, Günther—"he only acting the gestures"—vanquishes the wonder-maiden, and she goes to Worms, where the two bridal-feasts are celebrated with astounding splendour. But on her wedding-night the terrible Brunhild, thanks to her magical maiden-might (last relic of her primitive godhead!), ties Günther hard and fast, hand and foot, in her girdle, and hangs him up on a nail in the wall. Siegfried again helps Günther, and once Brunhild ceases to be a maiden all her strength is gone; Siegfried takes as his prize the fierce virgin's ring and girdle, which he presents to his own loving wife. Years of high enterprise and joyous living (with the help of the Hoard of the Nibelungs) go by, and there is only one little cause of trouble—Queen Brunhild's notion that Siegfried is only Günther's vassal, and that she is Queen Kriemhild's



*Photo: Fredk. Hollyer.*

"RING OF THE NIBELUNGS."

Communication of Siegfried's secret to Brunhild. Siegfried was vulnerable between the shoulders, and when Brunhild learned this secret she was able to contrive his death.

superior. In the Fourteenth Adventure—"How the two Queens rated one another"—the fatal secret is revealed. Siegfried, with his wife and his kingly father, with a great train of Nibelungen Ritters and Netherlanders, comes to a feast at Worms, and all goes well till Brunhild and Kriemhild take to arguing about the relative merits of their husbands, which ends in the former's assertion at the door of the Minster, when she overtakes the latter with her far more magnificent retinue, that "before King's wife shall vassal's wife never go." Then the secret came out like a lightning flash:

Then said the fair Kriemhilde. Right angry was her mood:
"Couldst thou but hold thy peace. It were surely for thy good:
Thyself has all polluted With shame thy fair bodye.
How can a concubine By right a king's wife be?"

In proof of which she produces the ring and the girdle, and Brunhild bursts into tears, afterwards deeply pondering how she can take vengeance for so black an injury to her pride.

She persuades the grim warrior Hagen to be the minister of her revenge. He wheedles from Kriemhild the secret that Siegfried has the one vulnerable spot between his shoulders, and the hero is treacherously killed while he is hunting. Then, that her humiliation may be complete, Kriemhild is persuaded to send for the Nibelungen Hoard, which is at once stolen by Hagen, and Siegfried's widow is left penniless and sorrowful for thirteen years. Then King Etzel sends from his far country to ask for her hand, and she accepts him, hoping that a new marriage may give her the power to hit back at her rival, Brunhild.

Years pass again and Kriemhild sends an invitation to Günther and his champions to visit her husband's court. Hagen at once realises the reason for the invitation, and tries to persuade the king not to make the journey, but he is overruled. Weird omens meet them on the way which Hagen, now grown old and reckless, treats with the scorn of desperation—"mixed was his hair with the grey colour, his limbs massy, and menacing his look"—but he has no fear: with his staunch companion Volker, with his "steel fiddle-bow," he is confident he can still beat strange music from the helms of his foes.

King Etzel, who knows nothing of Kriemhild's plan of vengeance, receives the strangers with joy and hospitality, but the trouble starts as soon as they appear at the royal feast. Hagen's swift reply to Kriemhild's provocation is to hew off the head of her and Etzel's son, making it bound into his mother's lap. Kriemhild was like a fury, and a great fight begins. Carlyle has described it in vivid sentences that are all his own :

Host after host, as they enter that huge vaulted Hall, perish in conflict with the doomed Nibelungen ; and ever after the terrific uproar, ensues a still more terrific silence. All night and through morning it lasts. They throw the dead from the windows ; blood runs like water ; the Hall is set fire to, they quench it with blood, their own burning thirst they slake with blood. It is a tumult like the Crack of Doom, a thousand-voiced, wild-stunning hubbub ; and frightful like a Trump of Doom, the *Sword-fiddlebow* of Volker, who guards the door, makes music to that death-dance. Nor are traits of heroism wanting, and thrilling tones of pity and love; as in that act of Rudiger, Etzel's and Kriemhild's champion, who, bound by oath, "lays his soul in God's hand," and enters that Golgotha to die fighting against his friends; yet first changes shields with Hagen, whose own, also given him by Rudiger in a far other hour, had been shattered in the fight. "When he so lovingly bade him give the shield, there were eyes enough red with hot tears ; it was the last gift which Rudiger of Becharen gave to any Recke. As grim as Hagen was, and as hard of mind, he wept at the gift which this hero good, so near his last times, had given him ; full many a noble Ritter began to weep."

At last Volker is slain ; they are all slain, save only Hagen and Günther, faint and wounded, yet still unconquered among the bodies of the dead. Dietrich the wary, though strong and invincible, whose Recken too, except old Hildebrand, he now finds are all killed, though he had charged them strictly not to mix in the quarrel, at last arms himself to finish it. He subdues the two wearied Nibelungen, binds them, delivers them to Kriemhild ; "and Herr Dietrich went away with weeping eyes, worthily from the heroes." These never saw each other more. Kriemhild demands of Hagen, Where the Nibelungen Hoard is ? But he answers her, that he has sworn never to disclose it while any of her brothers live. "I bring it to an end," said the infuriated woman ; orders her brother's head to be struck off, and holds it up to Hagen. "Thou hast known it now according to thy will," said Hagen ; "of the Hoard knoweth none but God and I ; from thee, she-devil (*valendinne*), shall it for ever be hid." She kills him with his own sword, once her husband's ; and is herself struck dead by Hildebrand, indignant at the woe she has wrought ; King Etzel, there present, not opposing the deed. Whereupon the curtain drops over that wild scene ; "the full highly honoured were lying dead ; the people all had sorrow and lamentation ; in grief had the king's feast ended, as all love is wont to do."

Nothing is clear or coherent in the *Nibelungen Lied.* It is an antique tapestry shaken by the wind. But its stark heroes, its fierce queens, are bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. As Carlyle said: "The city of Worms, had we a right imagination, ought to be as venerable to us moderns as any Thebes or Troy was to the ancients."

## § 4

### THE TROUBADOURS

During the Moorish occupation, there grew up in Spain a life of gaiety and courtesy for courtesy's sake, and the lute and mandolin music, which was its joyous accompaniment, crossed the Pyrenees, reaching Provence and Languedoc first of all, then Sicily and Italy, and finally filling all Western Europe with wandering Troubadours and Minnesingers. The roving minstrel who sang in the vernacular and besought his hearers to listen to a tale, "which is merryr than the nightengale," was the pioneer of all the romantic and sentimental literature of modern Europe.

Some of the Troubadours were nobles and princes, among them our own Richard Cœur-de-Lion, who wrote verses in both the *langue d'oc* and the *langue d'œil*, the two dialects of mediæval French, and who has left one poem of genuine beauty, written while he was imprisoned by the Duke of Austria on his way home from the crusade.

The reign of the Troubadours lasted about two centuries; it nearly coincides with the eleventh and twelfth centuries. A host of fantastic legends is recalled by the names of the Troubadours; their passion scaled the heights of Southern society, lofty princesses accepting their hearts as oblations to beauty. Some of them were gallant Crusaders; many became monks when the love-time was over for ever. Perhaps the most romantic figure of all was Jaufré Rudel, whose soul ever turned to Melisande, the Lady of Tripoli, praised alike for her beauty, her courtesy, and her charity. Both Browning and Swinburne have been inspired by his story; the latter, in whose poems the very spirit of the

Troubadours lives again so often, has told the tale of his soul's glad passing :

> Died, praising God for His gift and grace :
> For she bowed down to him weeping and said
> " Live " ; and her tears were shed on his face
> Or ever the life in his face was shed.
> The sharp tears fell through her hair, and stung
> Once, and her close lips touched him and clung
> Once, and grew one with his lips for a space ;
> And so drew back, and the man was dead.

It must not be forgotten that the Troubadour, even if he came of lowly origin, was always a lordly person—ennobled by his poetical gift beyond every ungifted noble. Writers of modern romance have confused him with the *Jogller* or musician who accompanied his recitation with lute or mandolin. This accompanist was of lower rank, being merely a successor of the merry-man who went from castle to castle to play dance-music, show acrobatic feats, or even exhibit performing animals.

The Trouvères, or court poets, who flourished in Northern and Central France during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, are a minor poetic influence in comparison with the Troubadours. They were not lovers singing to their lady-loves at the height of their age ; no legends have gathered about their names, and they pass like phantoms across the history of a land more interested in politics and war than in poetry. They were pedants of a sentimentality which seems cold and remote from life in comparison with the passion of the Southern singers. Nevertheless this Northern cult was one of the minor influences which refined conduct and enforced the ideal of chivalry. They, like the Troubadours, were pioneers of literature.

The most famous of the romances in verse that were recited by the wandering mediæval minstrels is *The Song of Roland*, in which an unknown eleventh-century poet tells, with fine dramatic simplicity, the story of a great fight in a pass in the Pyrenees between the army of Charlemagne and the Saracens of Saragossa. Charlemagne, with his main army, deceived by the Saracens, has crossed the mountains back into France, leaving Roland with the rear-guard to hold the pass. Roland is treacherously attacked

by the Saracens, aided by recreant Christian knights, and after a mighty struggle he is killed, with the whole of his army.

Among French stories of a rather later time, the most interesting is *Aucassin and Nicolette*, which belongs to the thirteenth century. It is a love romance written partly in prose and partly in verse.

## § 5

### DANTE

There is no more magnificent personage in the whole pageant of literature than Dante—the tall, spare man with his long, grey robes, his red head-dress with the laurel leaves about it, and his sorrowful aquiline face, whose figure is as familiar to us as the figure of Shakespeare himself. We know little of the personal life of Shakespeare, and that little can hardly be called romantic, but we have the details of the life of Dante, and he is the hero of one of the strangest and most beautiful love stories in the world.

Dante was born in Florence in 1265. When he was nine he met Beatrice, a child of the same age. The children did not speak, but the poet declares that " from that day forward love quite governed my soul." Beatrice remained for him for ever " the glorious lady of my mind," and years afterwards he recalled that on the most wonderful day of his life she wore a dress " of a most noble colour, a subdued and goodly crimson, girdled and adorned in such sort as best suited with her very tender age." Nine years passed and the poet met Beatrice again, dressed in white, and walking with two older ladies in the streets of Florence. Again they did not speak, but " she turned her eyes thither where I stood sorely abashed, and by her unspeakable courtesy she saluted me with so virtuous a bearing that I seemed then and there to behold the very limits of blessedness." He only saw Beatrice once more. How pathetic and how ironic it is that Beatrice never knew of the deep passion that she had inspired in the greatest heart that ever beat in Italy, a passion immortalised in one of the supreme masterpieces of literature.

Beatrice married, and died when she was thirty-five. Writing after her death Dante said: "When I had lost the first delight of my soul (that is, Beatrice) I remained so pierced with sadness that no comfort availed me anything." The story of his passion is told in his first notable Italian book, *La Vita Nuova*—a philosophical treatise interspersed with sonnets. The following is Rossetti's translation of one of the most beautiful of these sonnets, in which Dante explains the reason of his lady's early death:

Such an exceeding glory went up hence
That it woke wonder in the Eternal Sire,
Until a sweet desire
Entered Him for that lovely excellence,
So that He bade her to Himself aspire;
Counting this weary and most evil place
Unworthy of a thing so full of grace.[1]

After the *Vita Nuova*, except for a series of lyrics Dante wrote nothing in his own language until he began *The Divine Comedy*. The Latin works which occupied the interregnum need not concern us. The great work of his life was his tribute to the woman whom he loved. Dante's *Divine Comedy* was written for the dead Beatrice. In the last chapter of the *Vita Nuova* he says:

If it be His pleasure through whom is the life of all things that my life continue with me a few years, it is my hope that I shall yet write concerning her what hath not before been written of any woman. After which may it seem good unto Him who is the master of grace that my spirit should go hence to behold the glory of its lady, to wit, Beatrice.

Two years after the death of Beatrice, the poet married a lady of noble birth, whose fidelity and strength of character in times of trouble were outweighed by a violence of temper which became not the least of the troubles of a tragically troubled and disappointed life. It is supposed that the poet was referring to his own wife, Gemma, when he wrote in the sixteenth canto of the "Inferno":

Me, my wife
Of savage temper, more than aught beside,
Hath to this evil brought.

It is impossible to understand Dante without some idea

[1] *Vita Nuova* (Rossetti's translation).

of the setting of his life. He is the bridge between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. He was born in the mediæval golden age, having as contemporaries Roger Bacon, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Louis of France. Giotto, the great mediæval painter, was his companion and friend. The fact that Dante was the first great Italian writer who wrote in his own language has caused him to be regarded as the forerunner of the Renaissance. But *The Divine Comedy* is the incarnation of all that is most splendid and wonderful in mediæval Catholicism. In it the reader finds the quintessence of the philosophy, theology, and the chivalry of the Middle Ages. The scheme of the poem is even more grandiose than the scheme of the "Iliad"; the nobility of its conception and the amazing variety of its characters have no parallel in literature. The wealth of its imagery may be realised in the English translations, but, alas! the beauty of the verse is naturally lost. Just as Shakespeare has no peer among later English writers, so Dante stands supreme in the literature of Italy. But he is far more than an Italian figure; he belongs to Europe, and he and his work are the crown and the climax of the Middle Ages.

Unfortunately for his happiness, while still a young man Dante became involved in the intrigues of Florentine politics, in the feud between the two parties, the Guelphs and Ghibellines. The first were the adherents of the Papal power, and the second supported the authority of the Emperor, a German prince living in Vienna, who claimed sovereignty in Italy. It is sufficient to note that Dante, after facing both ways for some years, espoused the cause of the Emperor, and that the Guelphs having triumphed, he was banished from Florence in 1302, and remained in exile until he died in 1321, wandering from city to city, travelling certainly as far as Paris, and even, according to tradition, to Oxford. For the most part he lived unhappily in various Italian cities, and *The Divine Comedy* was probably written in Verona and Ravenna.

Interspersed among the supernatural incidents of *The Divine Comedy* there are constant references to events in the poet's own life—not only to his one absorbing and inspiring passion, but also to the political conflicts and feuds in which he had been concerned.

*The Divine Comedy* is a description of Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory. Literally, it is a vision of the state of souls after death; allegorically, it is a demonstration of man's need of spiritual illumination and guidance.

Before we take our way with Dante through the zones of Hell, there are two things to keep in mind; first, that the "Inferno" is, apart from other things, the greatest adventure-story in the world; and, secondly, that it is made alive and real with vivid, graphic *details*, like those of *Robinson Crusoe* or *Gulliver's Travels*. To exemplify the kind of thing we mean, let us take a single instance, as a type of what the reader of the poem meets at every step—an example which was used by Ruskin to illustrate the shaping power of intense imagination to body forth the forms of things unknown: "Dante's Centaur, Chiron, dividing his beard with his arrow before he can speak, is a thing no mortal would ever have *thought* of. But the real living Centaur actually trotted across Dante's brain, and he saw him do it."

Such things, of course, are lost in an epitome. But, even so, the great sights of the "Inferno" stand out like pictures, and remain in the mind's eye, an unforgettable series of stupendous scenes.

The shape of Hell is that of an enormous pit, like an inverted cone, whose point is at the centre of the earth, while its sides are occupied by broad steps or ledges, one below the other, and of course diminishing in size as they descend, the most guilty sinners being lowest down.

Dante, having lost his way in a gloomy forest, is met by Virgil, who promises to show him the punishments of Hell. Following Virgil, he comes to the gate of the Inferno, where, after having read the dreadful words that are written thereon—"All hope abandon, ye who enter here"—they both enter. Just within the entrance comes a dark plain, the vestibule of Hell, in which are the Spirits of the Selfish and the Idle, the Giddyaimless, stung by wasps and hornets, and running for ever behind a whirling flag.

Then, crossing the plain, they arrive at the River Acheron, the Stream of Sorrow. There are the crowds at Charon's ferry, "staying for waftage," and the fierce old man with

eyes like wheels of flame, who ferries them across. Dante falls into a trance of terror from which, being roused by a clap of thunder, he finds that they have crossed the river. Thence they descend into Limbo, the first circle of Hell. There he finds the souls of the great pagans, who, though they lived nobly, were unbaptized. Homer, Horace, Ovid, welcome Dante as one of themselves.

Coming into the second circle of Hell, Dante at the entrance beholds Minos, the Infernal Judge, an enormous man-faced dog. Here he witnesses the punishment of guilty lovers, blown like cranes upon a mighty wind.

> Now 'gin the rueful wailings to be heard.
> Now am I come where many a plaining voice
> Smites on mine ear. Into a place I came
> Where light was silent all. Bellowing there groan'd
> A noise, as of a sea in tempest torn
> By warring winds. The stormy blast of hell
> With restless fury drives the spirits on,
> Whirl'd round and dash'd amain with sore annoy
> When they arrive before the ruinous sweep,
> There shrieks are heard, there lamentations, moans,
> And blasphemies 'gainst the good Power in heaven.

There they saw Semiramis and Cleopatra, and :

> There mark'd I Helen, for whose sake so long
> The time was fraught with evil; there the great
> Achilles, who with love fought to the end.
> Paris I saw, and Tristan; and beside,
> A thousand more he show'd me, and by name
> Pointed them out, whom love bereaved of life.

Above all, there is Francesca of Rimini and her lover Paolo, whose story he has made immortal. This story, which she tells to Dante—how they were surprised and slain together by her husband, John the Lame, a lord of Rimini—makes him faint with pity.

When he recovers he finds himself in the third circle, where the gluttons lie in mire under a continual rain of hail, snow, and filthy water, while Cerberus, the gigantic dog, barks, snarls, and rends them. At the beginning of the fourth circle he sees Plutus, god of riches, guarding the circle of the spendthrifts and the misers, who spend their time in rolling mighty crags to crash against each other; and farther on, the Styx, the awful marsh in which the

Sullen writhe like eels, and in whose dark waters fight the Spirits of the Angry.

> Now seest thou, son!
> The souls of those whom anger overcame.
> This too for certain know, that underneath
> The water dwells a multitude, whose sighs
> Into these bubbles make the surface heave,
> As thine eye tells thee wheresoe'r it turn.
> Fixed in the slime, they say: "Sad once were we,
> In the sweet air made gladsome by the sun,
> Carrying a soul and lazy mist within:
> Now in these murky settlings are we sad."
> Such dolorous strain they gurgle in their throats,
> But word distinct can utter none.

They come at last to the base of a lofty tower, from which shine two signal-flames; and now they behold Phlegyas, the ferry-man of the lake, coming with angry speed to convey them to the other side. Through the grim vapour are seen glowing, red with fire, the towers and pinnacles of Satan's City of Dis. The gates are guarded by a horde of demons; upon the battlements the blood-stained Furies tear the serpents of their hair, shrieking for Medusa to turn the pilgrims into stone. A rapt, disdainful Angel, who speeds dry-footed across the lake, scatters these monsters from the pathway, and the two poets, entering the city, find a great plain rough with lidless sepulchres, each filled with fire and holding the tormented spirit of a heretic in a red-hot bed. From one of these the proud spirit of Farinata lifts his head, "looking as if he entertained great scorn of Hell."

Descending into the seventh circle, by a wild chasm of shattered rocks, they come to the river of blood, in which stand the Tyrants, while troops of Centaurs, with Chiron at their head, gallop up and down the bank and shoot the Sinners with their arrows. Still in the seventh circle, they enter the dismal wood of the Self-murderers, whose spirits have become rough stunted trees, with poisoned fruit on which feed the Harpies, huge filthy birds with women's faces; while through this dreadful forest other spirits rush, pursued by hell-hounds. Beyond this wood lies a naked plain of fiery sand, the region of the Violent, under a slow eternal shower of flakes of fire.

Journeying along the bank of the river of blood which crosses the sand, they reach the place where the flood falls in a cataract into a gulf. Virgil, having thrown Dante's girdle into the abyss, they behold at that signal a monstrous and horrible figure coming swimming up through the dark air—it is Geryon.

"Lo! the fell monster with the deadly sting
Who passes mountains, breaks through fenced walls
And firm embattled spears, and with his filth
Taints all the world." Thus me my guide address'd,
And beckon'd him, that he should come to shore,
Near to the stony causeway's utmost edge.
Forthwith that image vile of Fraud appear'd,
His head and upper part exposed on land,
But laid not on the shore his bestial train.
His face the semblance of a just man's wore,
So kind and gracious was its outward cheer;
The rest was serpent all: two shaggy claws
Reach'd to the arm-pits; and the back and breast,
And either side, were painted o'er with nodes
And orbits. Colours variegated more
Not Turks nor Tartars e'er on cloth of state
With interchangeable embroidery wove,
Nor spread Arachne o'er her curious loom.
As oft-times a light skiff, moor'd to the shore,
Stands part in water, part upon the land;
Or, as where dwells the greedy German boor,
The beaver settles, watching for his prey;
So on the rim, that fenced the sand with rock,
Sat perch'd the fiend of evil. In the void
Glancing, his tail upturned its venomous fork,
With sting like scorpions arm'd.

Descending on the monster's back the poets reach the eighth circle, which is divided into ten gulfs, the place of punishment for divers kinds of Fraud. In the first are the Seducers, scourged by horned demons. In the next are the Flatterers, immersed in filth. Then come the Simonists, set head downwards in deep narrow holes, with feet that burn like lamps above the level of the rock. Then the hordes of the False Prophets, whose necks are twisted round so that they face backwards.

Next comes a dyke of boiling pitch, in which the Spirits of Embezzlers plunge and dive, watched by black-winged demons armed with prongs. This is one of the most vivid

scenes in the Inferno. The chief of these hobgoblins is named Barbariccia, while under him are Graffiacane, Draghignazzo, Farfarello, and the rest of the foul crew.

> As dolphins that, in sign
> To mariners, heave high their arched backs,
> That thence forewarn'd they may advise to save
> Their threaten'd vessel; so, at intervals,
> To ease the pain, his back some sinner show'd,
> Then hid more nimbly than the lightning-glance.
> E'en as the frogs, that of a watery moat
> Stand at the brink, with the jaws only out,
> Their feet and of the trunk all else conceal'd,
> Thus on each part the sinners stood; but soon
> As Barbariccia was at hand, so they
> Drew back under the wave. I saw, and yet
> My heart doth stagger, one, that waited thus,
> As it befalls that oft one frog remains,
> While the next springs away: and Graffiacan,
> Who of the fiends was nearest, grappling seized
> His clotted locks, and dragg'd him sprawling up,
> That he appear'd to me an otter.

Observe the brief sharp touch which brings before the eye the body hauled out of the pitch, black, sleek, and glistening—"like an otter." Two of the demons, fighting for their prey like vultures, drop, locked together, into the seething pitch, and their fellow-goblins have to fish them out, all glued and struggling, with their prongs.

The poets leave them at the task and proceed to the succeeding chasms, where they come upon the Hypocrites weighed down by gilded cowls of lead—the Thieves, who change with agony to serpents and from serpents back to sinners—the Evil Counsellors, each a flame, dancing like strange fireflies in their gloomy gorge—the Traitors and Schismatics, rent with awful wounds, one of whom, Brian of Boru, who rebelled against Henry the Second, King of England, holds up by the hair his severed head to talk to Dante.

Thence the poets make their way to the ninth circle. The sound of a great horn, like thunder, strikes their ears, and soon they see three giants standing at the verge of the lowest pit of Hell. One of these, Antæus, sets them down upon the bottom of the gulf, which is a sea of everlasting ice, in which the forms of the tormented appear like flies in

crystal. Two of these spirits are frozen in a single hole, and one of them is gnawing like a dog the other's skull. He lifts his teeth to tell his awful story. He is Ugolino, who was thrown into the Tower of Famine with his sons and left to starve to death. His story of the deaths of his two dying children is one of the most pathetic in the world. His companion in the ice is Archbishop Ruggiere, who had sent them to the Tower.

> Thus having spoke,
> Once more upon the wretched skull his teeth
> He fasten'd like a mastiff's 'gainst the bone,
> Firm and unyielding.

And so we come to the last scene of all, the lowest pit of Hell, the Judecca, so called from Judas, the place of the great Betrayers. The Arch-Traitor Satan stands for ever in the centre of it, champing three sinners in his three huge jaws, and sending forth from his vast bat-wings an icy wind that freezes all the sea. Past him, the pilgrims mount through a long steep passage :

> . . . By that hidden way
> My guide and I did enter, to return
> To the fair world; and heedless of repose
> We climb'd, he first, I following his steps,
> Till on our view the beautiful lights of heaven
> Dawn'd through a circular opening in the cave:
> Thence issuing we again beheld the stars.

Leaving the darkness and agonies behind them, they come out at last beside the Hill of Purgatory, under the quiet shining of the stars.

Unlike the conception of other mediæval writers, Dante imagined Purgatory as being in the open air. Round the steep sides of its mountain run seven circles, each of them corresponding to one of the seven deadly sins of the mediæval Church. In the lower terraces are expiated the sins of the spirit, in the fourth terrace sloth, which is a sin both of the spirit and of the flesh, and in the three uppermost terraces the sins of the flesh alone. At the beginning of each terrace instances are given of the virtue of which the sin is the opposite, and at the end of each stands an angel personifying it. Finally, when Dante and his guide have passed the last of the terraces, they enter into the Earthly Paradise

where Dante sees the mystical procession representing the triumphant march of the Church, at the end of which on a chariot, amidst a hundred angels singing and scattering flowers, Beatrice appears clad in the mystical colours red, white, and green, and crowned with a wreath of olive leaves, the symbol of wisdom and of peace, over her snow-white veil. At her coming Virgil vanishes to go back to his sad dwelling in the limbo from which he came.

So the reader reaches the "Paradiso," which is the crowning glory of *The Divine Comedy*. Guided by Beatrice the poet passes through nine Heavens, which are moving spheres revolving round our globe, till he reaches the final motionless and fixed Heaven in the Empyrean. The seven lowest of the Heavens are named after the moon, the sun, and the planets, and the eighth after the fixed stars. All these are visible from earth. Above them is the ninth or crystalline Heaven, which directs by its movements the daily revolution of all the others. In it Nature starts; from it proceed time and motion, together with all celestial influences for the government of the world. It is:

> The robe that with its regal folds enwraps
> The world and with the nearer breath of God
> Doth burn and quiver.

Above it, climax of the vision, is the infinite and motionless sea of divine love where God makes blessed the saints and angels in the Vision of His Essence.

The old commentators on Dante have much to say regarding his theology, his metaphysics, his use of allegory, and such matters. Just so the commentators on Virgil in the Middle Ages regarded him, not so much as a great poet as a skilled magician, from whose verses they drew oracles. Just so the early Puritans disputed whether Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress* was a sound exponent of the faith. One sage maintains that Beatrice represents the Church, another that she personifies the love of God. The lover of great poetry merely stops his ears. All such rubbish should be swept into the dustbin and forgotten. Only then can the mighty work of Dante be enjoyed as what it is, a grand and noble poem, a story of immortal joys and sorrows, which has no parallel among the works of men.

## § 6

### FROISSART'S CHRONICLES

Froissart's *Chronicles of England, France, and Spain* is the outstanding example of the mediæval chronicle, which is the romance of history. Froissart was born in 1338 and spent most of his life wandering from one European court to another, picking up gossip. His chief patron was good Queen Philippa, the wife of Edward III. His chronicle is the history of the fourteenth century, and of the wars between England and France. It is written, not so much to communicate facts as, in the words of its author, " to encourage all valorous hearts and to show them honourable examples." It is also, in the next degree, a gallery of portraits ; limned in their own works and words, their works rather than their words, of the right valiant princes and nobles Sir John Froissart had personally known.

Froissart cared little for the common folk ; they finish unlamented by the thousand, but the death of a single knight of known prowess affects him to tears. " His history," says Sir Walter Scott, " has less the air of a narrative than of a dramatic representation. The figures live and move before us ; we not only know what they did, but learn the mode and process of the action, and the very words with which it was accompanied. . . . In Froissart, we hear the gallant knights, of whom he wrote, arrange the terms of combat and the manner of the onset ; we hear the soldiers cry their war-cries ; we see them strike their horses with the spur ; and the liveliness of the narration hurries us along with them into the whirlwind of battle."

Perhaps the story of the Count de Foix and his son, Gaston, to whom the King of Navarre gave a little bag of powder, telling him it would reconcile his mother and father if strewn on the latter's meat, is the most terrible example in the book of the mediæval savagery, which so ruthlessly sought its ends under the glittering surface of this chivalrous society. The bag really contained a deadly poison ; and the child who tried to starve himself to death, when it was accidentally discovered, died unforgiven —by yet another accident—at the hand of his father.

Froissart was translated in 1523 by a great English translator of Romance, Lord Berners, whose glittering pages " breathe the spirit amd the very air of that age of infinite variety, in which the knight-errant appears side by side with the plundering adventurer, while popular uprisings sound the first note of alarm to feudal oppressors."

Philippe de Commines, minister of that astute monarch Louis XI of France, was an historian of a very different order. His book is the calm judicious record of the reign of his sovereign, who, by patient and cunning statecraft, laid the foundations of modern France.

## § 7

### CHAUCER AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Geoffrey Chaucer, the father of English poetry, was born in 1340. We have seen how the great Greek literature was produced after the victories of Marathon and Salamis, and the great Roman literature at the time of Rome's supreme military glory. Similarly, the first great English poetry was written, in the age of Crécy and Poitiers, in the century of the military triumphs of Edward III and the Black Prince.

Chaucer's father was a prosperous London vintner. As a young man he served with the English army in France, afterwards obtaining a small place at Court. He was a man of considerable parts, and was first promoted to a good position in the Custom House, and was later sent on diplomatic missions to France and Italy. In Italy he met the poet Petrarch, and most certainly became acquainted with the stories in Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

Petrarch and Boccaccio were the two foremost Italian writers after the death of Dante and before the Renaissance. Petrarch wrote both in Latin and Italian. But it is through his Italian love poetry, in which he immortalised Laura, that he has an important place in literary history. Boccaccio wrote the *Decameron* between the years 1344 and 1350. He was the father of Italian prose, and his stories exactly reflect the nature of the Italian people, its grace and elegance, its naïveté, and, what is to the Northener, its rather repellent coarseness.

Chaucer had evidently not forgotten Boccaccio's stories when he sat down to write *The Canterbury Tales*, though he attained a far greater measure of realism and humanism than his Italian contemporaries. *The Canterbury Tales* begin with a prologue in which are described a number of typical English men and women of the Middle Ages, intent on making a pilgrimage from the Tabard Inn in Southwark to the shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury—the Knight, the Prioress, the Miller, the Man of Law, the Parson, the Wife of Bath, and so on. Each character is sketched with masterly skill, and the English reader feels that he is being introduced to actual men and women of his own blood, just as he does when reading Shakespeare or Dickens. There was no class feeling in Merrie England ; the Knight, of the flower of chivalry, hobnobbed happily with the Miller, and the Parson with the Shipman. There is a vast difference between fourteenth and twentieth-century English, and owing to this difference it is probable that Chaucer is read very little nowadays. It may therefore be worth while to quote his description of the nun who was one of the pilgrims who journeyed to the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury. The spelling and some of the words have an unfamiliar appearance, but there is no difficulty in understanding the lines, and if they are read aloud there is no chance of missing their musical cadence.

Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioresse,
That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy
Hire gretteste ooth was but by seinté Loy,
And she was clepéd madame Eglentyne.
Ful weel she soong the servicé dyvyne,
Entuned in hir nose ful semely,
And Frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly
After the scole of Stratford-atté-Bowe,
For Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe.
At meté wel y-taught was she with-alle,
She leet no morsel from hir lippés falle,
Ne wette hir fyngrés in hir saucé depe,
Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe,
Thát no drope ne fille upon hire breste;
In curteisie was set ful muchel hir leste.
Hire over-lippé wypéd she so clene,
That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene
Of grecé, when she dronken hadde hir draughte
Ful semély after hir mete she raughte,

And sikerly she was of greet desport,
And ful plesáunt and amyable of port,
And peynéd hire to countrefeté cheere
Of Court, and been estatlich of manere,
And to ben holden digne of reverence.
But for to speken of hire conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous
She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous
Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
Of smalé houndés hadde she that she fedde
With rosted flessh, or milk and wastel breed;
But sooré wepte she if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smoot it with a yerdé smerte;
And al was conscience and tendré herte.
Ful semyly hir wympul pynchéd was;
Hire nose tretys, hir eyen greye as glas,
Hir mouth ful smal and ther-to softe and reed,
But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed
It was almoost a spanné brood I trowe
For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.
Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war
Of smal coral aboute hire arm she bar
A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,
And ther-on heng a brooch of gold ful sheene,
On which ther was first write a crownéd A,
And after *Amor vincit omnia.*

It has become a common English saying that the average Englishman can speak French after the "scole of Stratford-atte-Bowe," and this is perhaps the only common expression of modern English that dates back to the fourteenth century. Goldsmith may have taken his idea of the village clergyman, "passing rich on forty pounds a year," from Chaucer's "Poor Parson of a Town":

He waited after no pompe and reverence,
Ne maked him a spicéd conscience,
But Cristès loore, and his Apostles twelve,
He taughte, but first he folwed it hym selve.

After the Prologue, Chaucer relates the stories that each of the pilgrims tells: the Knight an old romance, the Prioress a legend of Our Lady, the Priest a ghost-story, and the Wife of Bath a lady who had had as many husbands as the woman of Samaria, a romantic tale of Sir Gærwain and his bride. The stories are in every mood—comic and sentimental, grave and gay, and are told with immense spirit and skill.



*Photo : Rischgitz Collection.*

CHAUCER AT THE COURT OF EDWARD III, BY FORD MADOX BROWN.
Tate Gallery, London.

Chaucer entered the royal service soon after he was twenty, and from then until the death of the King his life was spent in diplomatic missions abroad and in attendance at court.

Chaucer died in 1400. In his day educated people in England still spoke French and English, and Chaucer's great service to English literature is that his success as an English poet made it impossible for any later Englishman to write in a language not his own.

Contemporary with Chaucer were William Langland, the author of *Piers Plowman*, who was born in Oxfordshire in 1332; and John Gower, who died in 1408 and was buried in St. Saviour's Church, Southwark, and whose *Pyramus and Thisbe* was acted by Nick Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. *Piers Plowman* describes the misery of the common people caused by the ceaseless and senseless wars that ravaged Western Europe in Chaucer's century, the obverse side of the glory of the third Edward.

## § 8

### MALORY'S *MORTE D'ARTHUR*

During the later centuries of the Middle Ages that heralded the Renaissance, Europe was stirred to a joyous awakening, the immediate result of which was a riot of romance-writing, and by good fortune we have a book in our own language that is the sum and symbol of all this splendid activity. Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* is not exactly an original work: it was compiled in the main from French romances. These in their turn, however, had been based on ancient Celtic legends, so that in the Knights of the Round Table are to be found a company of British heroes comparable to the heroes of classic myth and of the German *Nibelungen Lied*.

That Sir Thomas Malory was more than a translator is shown in the fact that the book occupies in English literature a position infinitely higher than its French originals ever held in the literature of France. He is said to have been a Warwickshire gentleman, knighted in 1445, and a Member of Parliament, who was taken captive in the Wars of the Roses, *Le Morte d'Arthur* being partly written in prison. The book was completed by 1470. It was the last important work finished before the introduction of printing, and one of the first printed by Caxton when he set up his press at Westminster.

*Le Morte d'Arthur* is a collection of simply written tales about Arthur, Launcelot, Galahad, Percival, Tristram, and other great figures, their loves and adventures. The book is divided into twenty-one parts, with an infinite number of

short chapters. The first part tells legends of the birth and early days of Arthur. One day there suddenly appeared in an English churchyard a huge stone, with a sword embedded in an anvil. Gold letters written on the marble declared that "Whoso pulleth out this sword from this stone and anvil is rightwise king born of all England." Arthur had been sent home from a New Year's tournament to fetch his elder brother's sword, and thinking to save himself the long journey by calling at the churchyard and taking the sword embedded in the stone, he pulled it free and thus became King of England. His accession entailed various adventures, including a stout battle with eleven kings and a great host, against which he "did so marvellously in arms that all men had wonder."

He married the beautiful Guenever, and lived in splendid state at the city of Carleon in Wales, surrounded by hundreds of knights and beautiful ladies, patterns of valour, breeding, and grace to all the world. The bravest of the knights formed the king's immediate circle, sitting with him at the Round Table, and "pleasing him more than right great riches." From the court of Arthur these knights went forth to all parts in search of adventure—to protect women, chastise oppressors, liberate the enchanted, enchain giants and malicious dwarfs. To read of their exploits is to consort with the greatest lovers the world has known, to enter the many-towered cities of the dreamland of chivalry, "where knights and dames with new and wondrous names go singing down the street." There is the thrilling tale of Sir Gawaine and Gaheris, and how four knights fought against them and overcame them, and how at the last moment their lives were saved at the request of four ladies: the tale of Pellinore, and how a lady desired help of him, and how he fought with two knights for her and slew one of them at the first stroke: the tale of the Lady of the Lake, and how she saved King Arthur from a mantle which should have burnt him, and how another lady helped La Cote Mail Taile in his fight against a hundred knights by conniving at his escape: of Launcelot's slaughter of a knight "who distressed all ladies, and also a villain that kept the bridge": and countless others in which love is often as important as valour itself.

The life and exploits of the famous Sir Tristram are described in rich detail, in the middle part of Malory's book. Tristram learned to harp, hawk, and hunt in France, and he makes an auspicious entry into the ranks of English chivalry by taunting two knights of the Round Table until they came at him " as it had been thunder " :

And Sir Dodinas' spear brast (broke) in sunder, but Sir Tristram smote him with a more might, that he smote him clean over the horse-croup, that nigh he had broken his neck. When Sir Sagramore saw his fellow fall he marvelled what knight he might be, and he dressed his spear with all his might, and Sir Tristram against him, and they came together as the thunder, and there Sir Tristram smote Sir Sagramore a strong buffet, that he bare his horse and him to the earth, and in the falling he brake his thigh. When this was done Sir Tristram asked them : " Fair knights, will ye any more ? Be there no bigger knights in the court of King Arthur ? "

After this Sir Tristram had great renown in Arthur's court, for he was ever ready for a " jousting " or a private duel. No sooner had he saved Sir Palomides' life, indeed, than the two are in arms against each other. " Have remembrance of your promise," Sir Tristram says, " that ye had made with me to do battle with me this day fortnight." " I shall not fail you," says Sir Palomides, whereupon " they mounted their horses and rode away together."

With the tale of Tristram and Iseult, the love potion, and King Mark's revenge, we pass on to the Quest of the Holy Grail, or Sangrael, the dish used by Christ when He ordained the Eucharist. This sacred vessel was supposed to have been brought to Glastonbury by Joseph of Arimathea. One night while King Arthur and his court were at supper, there was a sudden thunder, and " a sunbeam more clearer by seven times than ever they saw day," so that all the knights were transfigured, and all the hall was " fulfilled with good odours, and every knight had such meats and drinks as he best loved in this world." The Holy Grail itself had entered among them, covered with white samite. None saw it, nor who carried it. Then as swiftly it departed, and " they wist not where it became " ; whereupon Sir Gavaine and the knights vowed to go in search of it. Miraculous are the happenings which follow, and in the story a new nobility

is grafted on to the mingled pathos and comedy of the earlier pages.

Moving majestically by way of Sir Galahad, Sir Bors, and Sir Lionel, the narrative reaches its tragic ending, the inevitable issue of the guilty loves of Launcelot and Guenever, the wife of the King, encompassing the death of the deceived King Arthur because, for him, there was no longer "trust for to trust in. For I will into the Vale of Avilion to heal me of my grievous wound. And if thou hear never more of me, pray for my soul."

Though he sinned and was punished, Launcelot remains the ideal figure of chivalry, heightened by the devotion of the lovely Elaine, who died for unrequited love of him. Sir Ector's speech over his wasted body is perhaps the finest passage in the story:

"Ah, Launcelot," he said, "thou wert head of all Christian knights, and now, I dare say," said Sir Ector, "thou Sir Launcelot, there thou liest, that thou wert never matched of earthly knight's hand. And thou wert the courteoust knight that ever bare shield. And thou wert the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrad horse. And thou wert the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman. And thou wert the kindest man that ever struck with sword. And thou wert the goodliest person that ever came among press of knights. And thou wert the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies. And thou wert the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest."

We have seen how the Greek myths supplied the plots of the Athenian tragedies and were repeated by the Roman poets. We have noted how the German myths have been used by the greatest of German creative artists. Similarly the story told by Malory has inspired many English writers. Spenser's "Faerie Queen" owes much to it, and although we have no evidence that Shakespeare even read it, we know that Milton was contemplating an Arthurian epic in 1639. Tennyson in "The Idylls of the King," Swinburne in "Tristram of Lyonesse," Morris in "The Defence of Guenevere" and several other poems, and Matthew Arnold in "Tristram and Iseult," were all moved to write great poetry by *Le Morte d'Arthur*, while Mr. Maurice Hewlett has drawn on it for his contemporary romances.

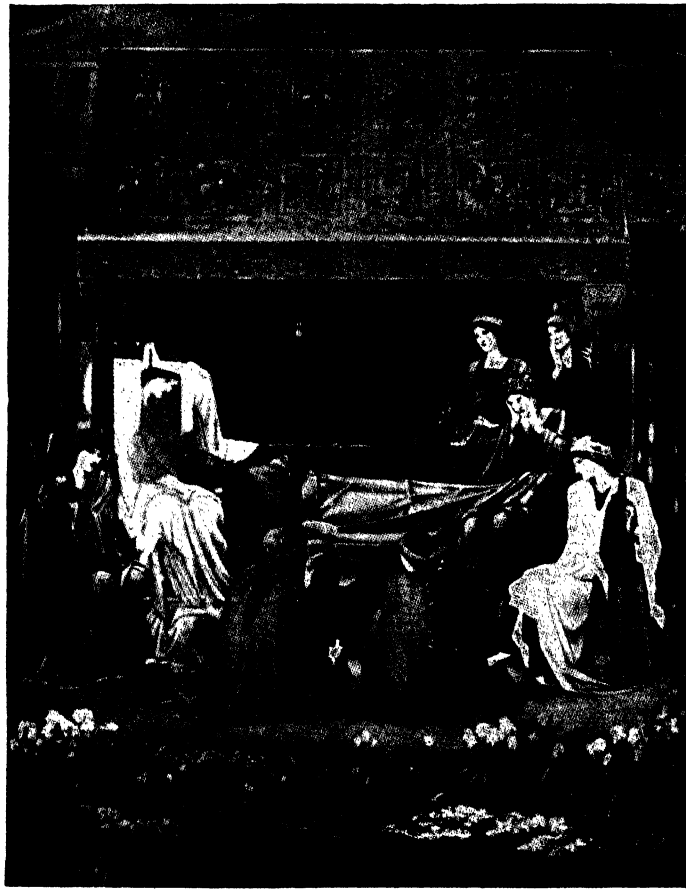


*Photo: Fredk. Hollyer.*

" KING ARTHUR IN AVALON," BY SIR E. BURNE-JONES.

King Arthur, the perfect knight, died the victim of treachery.

## § 9

### FRANÇOIS VILLON, POET AND THIEF

The literary history of the Middle Ages finishes with François Villon, the unlucky French poet-thief, who was born in 1431. He was a robber and a murderer, his life was spent in the vile Alsatias of Paris, he was frequently imprisoned, only escaping execution as if by a miracle, and at the end he vanished from the scene no one knows how or where. The date of his death is unrecorded, the place of his burial unknown.

Villon took the old French poetic forms, the Rondeau, the Rondel, and the Ballade, and gave them new life and new beauty. His verse is instinct with melancholy. He mocks at life, he boasts of his sins, but he writes all the time in the shadow of the gallows, and fear of the horror of death never leaves him. He seems to epitomise the pain and fear of the Middle Ages as Dante epitomises their grandeur and their ideals, and Chaucer their happy laughter.

Villon lives for us in Swinburne's beautiful poem :

> Prince of sweet songs made out of tears and fire,
> A harlot was thy nurse, a God thy sire;
> Shame soiled thy song, and song assoiled thy shame
> But from thy feet now death has washed the mire.
> Love reads out first at head of all our quire,
> Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name.

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# IX

# THE RENAISSANCE

## § 1

### THE NEW LEARNING

RENAISSANCE means rebirth. The epoch of European history that is known as the Renaissance was the period of the revival of learning, with the consequent impetus to literature and art, that occurred in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For six hundred years after the death of St. Augustine, Europe was enveloped in a mist of intellectual darkness, the ancient classic learning being preserved in only a few monasteries. The dawn came slowly, with the magnificent conception of the wonders of life to be found in Dante, with the joy of living so evident in Chaucer. With the Renaissance, the sun burst forth in fresh glory and revealed itself in the development of ideas and in new-found beauty of expression. The causes of the awakening can be only summarised here. The capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 was followed by the exodus of Greek scholars to Italy, carrying with them the knowledge of Greek literature that the west of Europe had almost entirely lost. A century earlier the Italians had learned from the Moors to make paper, and, most important of all, the first printing press was set up at Mentz in Germany, ten years before the fall of Constantinople. In 1492 Columbus discovered America, and men began to have an entirely new idea of the world. Social, political, and religious ideas were revolutionised, and the spirit of inquiry and intellectual activity heralded the Reformation. There is no more happy coincidence in the history of the world than that the new learning and the printing press, the new

way of propagating learning, came to Europe almost at the same moment.

Because of its nearness to Greece and because of its inheritance of the Roman tradition, the Renaissance began in Italy, and it was there that " man began to turn from the mediæval preoccupation with death, to raise his eyes from long dwelling on the grave, and to rejoice in the dear life of earth and the glory of this beautiful world." To quote Symonds, " Florence borrowed her light from Athens, as the moon shines with rays reflected from the sun." The Italian scholars turned their attention to rescuing the classical manuscripts from a mouldering death. Translations were made from the ancient authors of Greece and Rome, whose work had been buried in the monasteries.

The Italian Renaissance was the period of the magnificent Medicis, patrons of poets and artists, and the gorgeously reckless Borgias; of the Orsinis, the Colonnas, and the D'Estes, whose very names suggest ornate raiment, a fine and unmoral culture, and dark and mysterious intrigue; of Michael Angelo and Raphael and Da Vinci; of Ariosto and Machiavelli.

## § 2

### ARIOSTO AND MACHIAVELLI

In a brief consideration of Italian Renaissance literature, it is to Machiavelli and Ariosto that we turn in particular, though there were a legion of other writers busy in Italy during this period, whose work has genuine interest and importance. Italian Renaissance literature influenced great English writers like Spenser, Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Milton. It was, for example, from the stories written by Matteo Bandello that Shakespeare took the plots of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Twelfth Night.*

Ariosto's famous poem " Orlando Furioso " was described by John Addington Symonds as " the purest and most perfect extant example of Renaissance poetry." It is characteristic of its age in so much as its interest is human and that it has no concern with the deity or with life beyond the grave. The mediæval world was interested in

the other world. The Renaissance was interested in this world.

Lodovico Ariosto was born in 1474. When he was nineteen he entered the service of the Cardinal d'Este. He started writing the "Orlando Furioso" in 1505, and finished it ten years later. The poem gave him a great reputation in Italy, and Pope Leo X became one of the poet's patrons. After he had finished his poem, he wrote comedies in the manner of the Latin, Plautus and Terence. Towards the end of his life Ariosto was appointed governor of a province situated on the wildest heights of the Apennines. Like most poets, Ariosto was always impecunious, and the salary attached to the governorship was his reason for accepting what must have been an uncongenial office. His province was overrun with bandits, and on one occasion the poet-governor himself fell into their hands. When their leader found that his captive was the author of "Orlando Furioso," with a fine appreciation for literature he at once apologised for the dignity that had been put on him and set him free.

The "Orlando Furioso" is a romantic poem, describing fierce contests between Christian and Pagan knights, thrilling adventures and chivalrous loves. Its theme is of the same order as the theme of the stories of King Arthur. The poem is written in a series of cantos, each canto having a prelude which acts as a link between the episodes and gives the poet opportunity for moral and patriotic reflection. "Orlando Furioso" was first translated into English by Sir John Harrington, an Elizabethan poet. Perhaps its finest passages are those in which Ariosto describes Orlando's despair and subsequent madness when he finds that Angelica, whom he loves, has been faithless to him and has married Medoro.

I am not I, the man that erst I was,
Orlando, he is buried and is dead.
His most ungrateful love (ah foolish lasse!)
Hath killed Orlando and cut off his head.
I am his ghost that up and down must pass
In this tormenting dell for ever led,
To be a fearful sample and a just
To all such fooles as put in love their trust.

In another place Ariosto describes the death of a gallant young king with appealing charm.

> See how a purple flower doth fade and die
> That by the mower's hand is lowly laid;
> O'er in the garden falls the poppy's head,
> Weighed down and broken by the stormy rain.
> Thus to the ground, upon his pallid face,
> Fell Dardinell, and thus from life he passed.
> He passed from life, and with him passed away
> The spirit and the courage of his host.

At the beginning of the poem Ariosto declares :

> Of ladies and of knights, of arms and love,
> Of courtesy and of brave deeds I sing.

And the spirit of the poem is expressed in the lines :

> But he that loves indeed remaineth fast,
> And loves and serves when life and all is past.

Although Ariosto lived in comparative poverty, his genius was acclaimed by his fellow-countrymen, to whom he was " the divine Ariosto," and it is said that his great contemporary Galileo knew the whole of " Orlando Furioso " by heart. It may be seen from the short quotations printed here how direct is the connection between Ariosto and Shakespeare and the other Elizabethan poets.

Nicolo Machiavelli was the most important European politician of the early Renaissance. In his *Outline of History*, Mr. H. G. Wells has well described how profoundly Machiavelli's famous book *The Prince* affected the thoughts of men and the course of human affairs.

Machiavelli was born in Florence in 1469. Before he was thirty he was appointed secretary to the governing body of the Florentine Republic. This office led to his being sent as envoy to other Italian cities, as well as to the court of Louis XII of France. His most important mission occurred in 1502, when he was sent to represent Florence with Cesare Borgia, then at the height of his insolent and magnificent power. Machiavelli told the story of this mission in a series of letters, in which he described Cesare as " a prince who governs for himself." In another place he speaks of him as " a man without compassion, rebellious

to Christ, a basilisk, a hydra, deserving of the most wretched end." Yet for this picturesque monster Machiavelli conceived a considerable admiration, and in *The Prince* Cesare becomes a sort of model for other rulers to imitate. In 1512 the rule of the Medicis was restored in Florence and Machiavelli lost his official position. He was imprisoned and tortured, and afterwards retired to a small country estate, where *The Prince* was written. He died in Florence at the age of fifty-eight.

" Machiavellian " has come to mean subtle, unscrupulous craft. But the common judgment of Machiavelli is not entirely justified. He was a realist, with no great belief in either God or man, and he sets out in *The Prince* the principles of what is now generally described by the German phrase " Realpolitik," the political principles, that is, of Queen Elizabeth, Napoleon, and Bismarck. Machiavelli was not an idealist. He was concerned not with men as they ought to be, but as they are. Francis Bacon was a great admirer of *The Prince*, and he said : " We are much beholden to Machiavelli and others that wrote what men do and not what they ought to do." Hobbes, Bolingbroke, Hume, and Montesquieu were all to some extent his pupils.

The most conspicuous Italian writer of the later Renaissance period was the poet Torquato Tasso, the author of " Jerusalem Delivered," who was born in 1544 and died in 1595. Tasso was a poet of sentiment, and sentiment expressing the growing feeling for woman and music. Tasso finished his great poem when he was thirty-one. The last twenty years of his life were tragic. He became half insane, and spent his time " wandering like the world's rejected guest."

## § 3

### RABELAIS AND MONTAIGNE

After Italy, the revival of literature came in France. François Rabelais, the greatest of all French Renaissance writers, was born in 1490 and died in 1553. The Frenchman Rabelais, the Spaniard Cervantes, and the Englishman Shakespeare, are without question the three giants of the Renaissance. The Renaissance was a period of intense life

following a period of stagnation, an age of learning, optimism, and courage. Its spirit finds triumphant expression in the two great books of Rabelais, *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel.*

François Rabelais was born at Chinon in the province of Touraine in southern France. Very little is known about his youth, though it is said that his father was either an apothecary or an innkeeper. He took priest's orders in 1511, and for a year or two prior to that date and until 1524 he was a Franciscan monk, living in the monastery of Fontenay le Comte. Afterwards he became a Benedictine, and in 1530 he gave up his monk's habit to be a secular priest. He died on April 9, 1553. There are many legends about Rabelais's death-bed. He is said to have exclaimed : " The farce is finished " and " I am going to seek the great perhaps." But all these stories are probably apocryphal.

The Renaissance was, in a sense, a rebellion against the domination of a narrow, ignorant, monastical tyranny. Rabelais was a monk for over thirty years. He had an intimate knowledge of the abuses of the sheltered life, and he laughs at monks, and be it added, at most other people and things of his time, with whole-hearted laughter. Professor Saintsbury insists that Rabelais " neither sneers nor rages." He is a sort of sixteenth-century Charles Dickens, " a humorist pure and simple, feeling often in earnest, thinking almost always in jest." *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* are hard books to read. They are extremely obscene, though really not more so than other literature of the period, and Professor Saintsbury is perfectly justified in pointing out that the coarseness is open and natural and far less revolting than " the sniggering indecency which disgraces men like Pope, like Voltaire, and like Sterne."

His book is an orgy of words written in whirling sentences. He anticipated the love of fine-sounding words of Mr. Wells's Mr. Polly. The intention of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* is to preach the gospel of Pantagruelism, which teaches that only by humour and laughter can the world be cleaned and saved. Pantagruelism is a good and a true gospel preached by many another great man since the days of the great French laughing philosopher. As proof that Rabelais could be simple and unaffected, and that he has been grossly libelled when he has been described

as nothing but a "dirty old blackguard," one may quote the following paragraphs from the description of the life of the monks and nuns in the Abbey of Theleme in the translation by Sir Thomas Urquhart :

All their life was spent not in laws, statutes, or rules, but according to their own free will and pleasure. They rose out of their beds when they thought good ; they did eat, drink, labour, sleep, when they had a mind to it, and were disposed for it. None did awake them, none did offer to constrain them to eat, drink, nor do any other thing ; for so had Gargantua established it. In all their rule and strictest tie of their order there was but this one clause to be observed :—

DO WHAT THOU WILT

Because men that are free, well-born, well-bred, and conversant in honest companies, have naturally an instinct and spur that prompteth them unto virtuous actions, and withdraws them from vice, which is called honour. Those same men, when by base subjection and constraint they are brought under and kept down, turn aside from that noble disposition by which they were formerly inclined to virtue, to shake off and break that bond of servitude wherein they are so tyrannously enslaved ; for it is agreeable with the nature of man to long after things forbidden and to desire what is denied us.

There is, in this Utopian picture, the characteristic Renaissance love of beauty and seemliness with the equally characteristic Renaissance enlightened humanism. Enough, indeed, has been quoted from Rabelais to provide ample justification for the fine saying that his writing "seems to belong to the morning of the world, a time of mirth and a time of expectation."

### MONTAIGNE

Montaigne wrote a generation after Rabelais. He had none of his fellow-countryman's coarseness, none of his humour, none of his tremendous enjoyment of life. When Catholic was persecuting Protestant, and Protestant was persecuting Catholic, Montaigne agreed with neither and did his best to protect both. In his essays he is garrulous, good-natured, often trivial—a very gentle philosopher.

Tolerance, kindliness, sweetness, culture are the notes of Montaigne's essays. He talks always about himself, but there is in his pages none of what Mr. Lytton Strachey

has called "the tremendous introspections of Rousseau." Montaigne was a sceptic, the agnostic of the Renaissance. "What do I know?" he continually asked. And he never found an answer quite satisfactory to himself. He was not the man to kick against the pricks, but he contrived to combine resignation with self-respect. In one of his essays he quotes an old sailor, who said: "O God, Thou wilt save me, if it be Thy will, and if Thou choosest, Thou wilt destroy me; but, however it be, I will always hold my rudder straight." That is Montaigne.

His essays are himself. When Henry III told him that he liked his books, he replied, "I am my book." It covers almost all human experience. It expresses the whole mind of a kindly man of the world. "One finds in it all that one has ever thought."

Montaigne was a Catholic. Nevertheless, "it is a peevish infirmitie, for a man to thinke himselfe so firmely grounded, as to perswade himselfe, that the contrarie may not be believed." He hated fanaticism. He hated cruelty and loathed the horrors of punishment in his day. His humanitarianism, indeed, would have been on a high level to-day:

As for me, I could never so much as endure, without remorse and griefe, to see a poore, sillie, and innocent beast pursued and killed, which is harmlesse and void of defence, and of whom we receive no offence at all. And as it commonly hapneth, that when the Stag begins to be embost, and finds his strength to faile him, having no other remedie left him, doth yeeld and bequeath himselfe into us that pursue him, with teares suing to us for mercie,

> With blood from throat, and teares from eyes,
> It seemes that he for pitie cryes,

was ever a grievous spectacle unto me. I seldom take any beast alive, but I give him his libertie. Pythagoras was want to buy fishes of fishers, and birds of fowlers to set them free againe.

From the volume of his wisdom we select the following characteristic passages:

*Fear.* Such as are in continuall feare to lose their goods, to be banished, or to be subdued, live in uncessant agonie and languor; and thereby often lose both their drinking, their eating, and their rest. Whereas the poore, the banished, and seely servants, live often as carelessly and as pleasantly as the other.

*Constancy.* The reputation and worth of a man consisteth in his heart and will: therein consists true honour: Constancie is valour, not of armes and legs, but of minde and courage: it consisteth not in the spirit and courage of our horse, nor of our armes, but in ours.

*Glory.* Of all the follies of the world, the most universall, and of most men received, is the care of reputation, and studie of glorie, to which we are so wedded, that we neglect, and cast-off riches, friends, repose, life and health (goods effectuall and substantiall) to follow that vaine image, and idlie-simple voice, which hath neither body, nor hold-fast.

For Montaigne the whole law and the prophets was summarised in the sentence: "The greatest thing of the world is for a man to know how to be his owne."

## § 4

### CERVANTES

In Spain the literary glory of the Renaissance is the glory of Cervantes. Here, as in Italy and France and England, the golden age of the awakening saw the quickening of an essentially national life which found expression in a definitely national art and literature. The sixteenth century was the era of Spanish greatness. The Moors had at last been driven back to Africa, the Jews had been expelled, the Peninsula had become a united nation, made rich and famous by the prowess of her explorers and the valour of her armies. It was in this atmosphere of national glory that Velasquez painted and Cervantes wrote. Apart from the plays of Shakespeare, *Don Quixote* is the most beautiful and wonderful gift of the Renaissance to the literature of the world. And although Cervantes may have begun it with the idea of gibing at the whole idea of chivalry which, a real and human action motive in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, had become something of an absurdity in the sixteenth, his great book became much more than mere series of gibes while it was growing under his master hand. Hazlitt has said of *Don Quixote*:

The character of Don Quixote himself is one of the most perfect disinterestedness. He is an enthusiast of the most amiable kind; of a nature equally open, gentle, and generous; a lover of truth and justice; and one who had brooded over fine dreams of chivalry and romance, till they had robbed him of himself, and cheated his brain into a belief of their reality.

There cannot be a greater mistake than to consider *Don Quixote* as a merely satirical work, or as a vulgar attempt to explode "the long-forgotten order of chivalry." There could be no need to explode what no longer existed. Besides, Cervantes himself was a man of the most sanguine and enthusiastic temperament; and even through the carved and battered figure of the knight the spirit of chivalry shines out with undiminished lustre; as if the author had half-designed to revive the example of past ages, and once more "witch the world with noble horsemanship."

Miguel de Cervantes died on the same day as Shakespeare in the year 1616. He was born in 1547, and he lived the adventurous life of a typical Spaniard of his century. He fought at the famous sea battle of Lepanto, in which Don John of Austria, with a fleet of twenty-four Spanish ships, defeated the Turks. During the battle Cervantes received three gunshot wounds, one of which permanently maimed his left hand, "for the greater glory of the right," as he himself said. Four years afterwards he was taken prisoner by the Barbary Corsairs, and was kept as a slave in Algiers until the year 1580. From that time onwards Cervantes earned an insufficient living as a writer and a petty Government official. He was always very poor. He was more than once imprisoned, and the first part of *Don Quixote* was probably written in a prison cell. This first part was published in 1605. It had an immediate success, and several pirated translations, from which, of course, the author received nothing, appeared during the next few years, both in French and in English. The second part of *Don Quixote* was published in 1615. *Don Quixote* gives the reader, as has been well said, a brilliant panorama of Spanish society as it existed during the sixteenth century. To quote Fitzmaurice Kelly:

Nobles, knights, poets, courtly gentlemen, priests, traders, farmers, barbers, muleteers, scullions, and convicts; accomplished ladies, impassioned damsels, Moorish beauties, simple-hearted country-girls and kindly kitchen-wenches of questionable morals—all these are presented with the genial fidelity which comes of sympathetic insight. The immediate vogue of *Don Quixote* was due chiefly to its variety of incident, to its wealth of comedy bordering on farce, and perhaps, also, to its keen thrusts at eminent contemporaries; its reticent pathos, its large humanity, and its penetrating criticisms of life were less speedily appreciated.

There is the same charm in the diverse characters of *Don Quixote* as there is in the characters of *The Canterbury*

*Tales.* And the note of the masterpiece is an understanding humanism which was not only the brightest quality of the Renaissance, but is the characteristic of all really great literature. In telling the story of *Don Quixote*, Cervantes came to laugh and remained to pray. Don Quixote himself, "nigh fifty years of age, of a hale and strong complexion, lean bodied and thin faced, an early riser, and a lover of hunting," astride his steed Rozinante, so thin that its bones "stuck out like the corners of a Spanish reel," is a figure of fun. His adoration of his Dulcinea is ridiculous. His servant Sancho Panza is a glutton and a liar. Yet long before one has read *Don Quixote* to the end the knight has become the real hero of a genuine human romance, and Cervantes has discovered, what Dickens discovered when he created Mr. Toots and Captain Cuttle, that to be weak-minded is often to be large-hearted, and that the foolish are often more worthy of admiration than the wise. The knight never fails in chivalry, and his faith is unshakable. One of the most famous incidents in the story occurs when Don Quixote couches his lance and charges a windmill. When he first caught sight of the windmills he was vastly excited.

"Fortune," cried he, "directs our affairs better than we ourselves could have wished: look yonder, friend Sancho, there are at least thirty outrageous giants whom I intend to encounter; and, having deprived them of life, we will begin to enrich ourselves with their spoils; for they are lawful prize; and the extirpation of that cursed brood will be an acceptable service to heaven."

When the knight's lance is broken into shivers and he and his horse are hurled away, his faith remains unshaken. "That cursed necromancer Freston," he said, "has transformed these giants into windmills to deprive me of the honour of victory." The faith that can remove mountains must be a faith that can turn hard facts into thrilling romances. And only the man with a great heart ever had the audacity to tilt at windmills.

Sancho Panza, for all his gluttony and selfishness, is a good-natured and faithful servant, and it may be that when Dickens attached Sam Weller to Mr. Pickwick he had Sancho in mind. Sancho Panza is shrewd enough to see through his master, but because he can see through him



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"DON QUIXOTE AND MARITORNES AT THE INN," BY ROLAND WHEELWRIGHT.

he can see what is in him, and his master's great heart commands his servant's affection.

Cervantes gave the world one of its greatest and noblest figures—sanguine and enthusiastic, ennobled by his very illusions, graced with true dignity, even in the most undignified situations—always entirely lovable.

## § 5

### ERASMUS AND THOMAS MORE

The Renaissance saw the two great movements which more than anything else, more even than the French Revolution, have moulded the course of European history, the Reformation and the counter-Reformation. The Reformation occurred almost immediately after the invention of printing, and it was natural that the bitter controversy between the reformers and the adherents of the old faith should have led to the publication of a vast polemical literature. Books dealing with the religious and theological difficulties of bygone generations do not make exciting reading, and cannot be regarded as of any great literary importance. One, however, of the sixteenth-century theologians was a great scholar and a great writer. He was the Dutchman, Erasmus, the friend of Sir Thomas More, the author of *Utopia*, of Cardinal Wolsey, and of Dean Colet, whose enthusiasm for education and the new learning made him the founder of St. Paul's School, London. At the beginning of the Renaissance there was, perhaps, a greater enthusiasm for learning than there has been at any other time in European history, and of all the learned men in Renaissance Europe, Erasmus was notoriously the most learned. Popes, emperors, and kings conspired to do him honour.

Erasmus was one of the last great European writers who wrote in Latin. He was a voluminous author, and perhaps to modern readers his most interesting book is *The Praise of Folly*, which was reprinted more than seven times in the course of a few months. In *The Praise of Folly* Erasmus satirises "the student for his sickly look, the grammarian for his self-satisfaction, the philosopher for his

quibbling, the sportsman for his love of butchery, the superstitious for his belief in the virtue of images and shrines."

Sir Thomas More, with whose writings the Renaissance may be said to have begun in England, was born nearly a hundred years earlier than Shakespeare, and was the contemporary of Ariosto, Machiavelli, and Rabelais. More was a great lawyer (a Lord Chancellor in the reign of Henry VIII), a scholar, and a man of wide culture and appreciation. He was the intimate friend of Dean Colet, of Erasmus, and of the Dutch painter Holbein, who lived for a while in his house at Chelsea. He was a wit and a man of conscience and character, who lost great place and finally his life rather than agree to the Act of Supremacy, which made Henry VIII the supreme head of the English Church, declaring that " there are things which no Parliament can do—no Parliament can make a law that God shall not be God." It is an interesting fact that this great Renaissance scholar should have been beatified by Pope Leo XIII in 1886 and should now live in Church history as the Blessed Thomas More.

Thomas More was fascinated by the new learning in his early youth, and he was one of the first Englishmen to learn to read Greek. His famous book *Utopia*, which inspired Bacon's *The New Atlantis* and many another dream of the future, and which has given an expressive adjective to the English language, was obviously based on Plato's *Republic*. It is impossible to understand the spirit of the Renaissance unless one remembers that it was the age of the discovery of new countries, as well as of the discovery of the joy of old books ; the age of great voyagers as well as of great poets. The strange new continent of America had been discovered, and it was natural for a Renaissance thinker, weary of old abuses, and longing for a more rational and more kindly society, to imagine this existence of a far-away island, a Utopia, where men should live together in happiness and content. More followed Erasmus in writing his *Utopia* in Latin. It was first published in 1516 at Louvain. A second edition was issued in Paris in 1517, and a third edition at Basel in 1518. The first English translation, by Ralph Robinson, was published

in 1551. Mark Pattison says that in the *Utopia* More " not only denounced the ordinary vices of power, but evinced an enlightenment of sentiment which went far beyond the most statesmanlike ideas to be found among his contemporaries, pronouncing not merely for toleration, but rising even to the philosophic conception of the indifference of religious creed."

In *Utopia*, More described an imaginary island republic, the home of a people living an ideal life.

Among the other important prose writings of Renaissance England were Richard Hakluyt's *Voyages*, the literary result of the age of Drake and his fellow-adventurers, and John Lyly's *Euphues*, an example of over-coloured and highly artificial writing, fashionable at a time when men were just beginning to realise the full beauty of their own language.

## § 6

### SPENSER AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

The spirit of adventure, the joy of beauty, the new knowledge of ancient Greek and Renaissance Italian poetry were the influences to which Elizabethan poetry owed its character. The Elizabethan poet was a courtier. The Virgin Queen, herself no mean scholar, was the patron of letters, and the almost idolatrous regard that poets like Edmund Spenser and Philip Sidney had for her is clearly indicated in Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* The history of modern English poetry begins years before the accession of Elizabeth with Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey, both of whom lost their lives on the scaffold during the tyranny of Henry VIII. Wyatt was the first poet to write a sonnet in the English language. In addition to sonnets. Wyatt wrote songs, madrigals, and elegies, and his pretty talent may be gathered from his " The Lover's Appeal " :

> And wilt thou leave me thus,
> That hath given thee my heart
> Never for to depart
> Neither for pain nor smart:
> And wilt thou leave me thus?
> Say nay! say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus,
And have no more pity
Of him that loveth thee ?
Alas ! thy cruelty !
And wilt thou leave me thus ?
Say nay ! say nay !

Wyatt and his contemporary, Surrey, were the forerunners of Sidney and Spenser. Sir Philip Sidney is one of the most fascinating figures in English literary history—poet, scholar, traveller, and soldier. His *Arcadia* is a prose romance something in the manner of William Morris. His *Apology for Poetry* is an interesting apology of a poet for his art. His *Astrophel and Stella* is a series of sonnets relating the poet's own sad love story, overcoloured at times, but always sincere. Here is the first sonnet of the series :

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,
That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain,—
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,—
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,—
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
Studying inventions fine her wits to entertain ;
Oft turning others' leaves to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful flower upon my sunburned brain.
But words came halting forth. . . .
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite.
" Fool," said my muse to me, " look in thy heart and write."

Edmund Spenser, the author of " The Faerie Queene," was born in London in 1552.

Merry London, my most kindly nurse,
That to me gave this life's first native source.

He was educated at Merchant Taylors' School and Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, and while he was quite a boy he translated Petrarch into English verse. His first volume of poetry, *The Shepherd's Calendar*, was published in 1579 and dedicated to Philip Sidney. In 1580 Spenser was appointed Secretary to the Lord Deputy of Ireland, and most of the rest of his life was spent in that country. He was concerned in the Elizabethan repressions, and in his *View of the State of Ireland* he elaborated a vigorous policy for bringing the Irish to heel that in after years commended itself to Cromwell. Spenser was meanly treated by the

Queen, and Ben Jonson declares that he died of starvation in 1599. He was buried near Chaucer in Westminster Abbey. His great work, "The Faerie Queene," was written in Ireland. It is an elaborate series of allegories extremely difficult to understand, in which the poet set out to describe the character and training of an Englishman. The poem abounds in the manner of Ariosto with brave knights and fearsome dragons. Its value as literature depends on the charm of the verse, the variety of the imagery, and the abounding sense of beauty. Charles Lamb describes Spenser as "the poets' poet," and Milton, Dryden, Pope, and Keats have acclaimed him their master.

Although Spenser's touch is sometimes indecisive he has often vivid pictures in "The Faerie Queene"—as that of the knight peering into the den of the monster by the light of his own gleaming mail; of Fury, chained in iron, with eyes that flashed sparkles, gnawing his ruddy beard; of Mammon in his armour of rusted iron and dull gold, counting his hoard of coins; or of the little fountain in the Bower of Bliss where the golden-haired girls were bathing. Some of the most attractive writing is found in the "Epithalamion":

Wake now, my love, awake! for it is time;
The Rosy Morn long since left Tithones bed,
All ready to her silver coche to clyme;
And Phœbus gins to shew his glorious hed.
Hark! how the cheerefull birds do chaunt theyr laies
And carroll of Loves praise.
The merry Larke hir mattins sings aloft;
The Thrush replyes; the Mavis descant playes:
The Ouzell shrills; the Ruddock warbles soft;
So goodly all agree, with sweet consent,
To this dayes merriment.
Ah! my deere love, why doe ye sleepe thus long,
When meeter were that ye should now awake,
T' awayt the comming of your joyous make
And hearken to the birds love-learned song,
The deawy leaves among!
Nor they of joy and pleasance to you sing,
That all the woods them answer, and theyr eccno ring

. . . . . .

Harke! how the Minstrils gin to shrill aloud
Their merry Musick that resounds from far,
The pipe, the tabor, and the trembling Croud.
That well agree withouten breach or jar.

But, most of all, the Damzels doe delite
When they their tymbrels smyte,
And thereunto doe daunce and carrol sweet,
That all the sences they doe ravish quite;
The whyles the boyes run up and downe the street,
Crying aloud with strong confused noyce,
As if it were one voyce,
Hymen, iö Hymen, Hymen, they do shout;
That even to the heavens theyr shouting shrill
Doth reach, and all the firmament doth fill;
To which the people standing all about,
As in approvance, doe thereto applaud,
And loud advaunce her laud;
And evermore they Hymen, Hymen sing,
That al the woods them answer, and theyr eccho ring.

Space forbids more than a passing reference to other notable Elizabethan writers. Sir Walter Raleigh, a friend of Spenser, was both man of action and man of letters, perhaps the most chivalrous figure of a chivalrous age. When Elizabeth died and James of Scotland ruled, this "tall, handsome, and bold man" was imprisoned in the Tower for thirteen years, during which time he wrote his *History of the World*. Michael Drayton—"golden-mouthed Drayton"—the friend of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, born in 1563 and living till 1631, wrote sonnets which bear comparison with those of Shakespeare himself. Drayton was a voluminous writer, and some of his most charming writing is to be found in his early work, "The Shepherd's Garland." The following are the last lines from a roundelay called "Crowning the Shepherd's Queen":

From whence come all these shepherd swains,
And lovely nymphs attired in green?
From gathering garlands on the plains,
To crown our fair, the shepherd's queen.

The sun that lights the world below,
Flocks, flowers, and brooks will witness bear
These nymphs and shepherds all do know
That it is she is only fair.

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# X

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, 1564–1616

BY HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER

SHAKESPEARE was an Elizabethan playwright. Let us begin by emphasising that obvious, but often, as it would seem, half-forgotten fact. He wrote plays which were lively and amusing, which were stirring and profoundly searching, and he wrote them to be acted in the theatre he knew.

Let us first consider, then, his playwright's task in its very narrowest sense. He wrote for a theatre that was structurally simple. Four boards and a passion, it has been said, are all that is needed for the making of great drama, and certainly Shakespeare had to learn to rely upon little else. We may picture his early plays given in broad daylight upon a bare stage, backed probably by some hangings, painted to resemble tapestry, through openings in which the actors could come and go. The audience, in composition and temper, we could probably best match to-day by looking, not into a fashionable theatre, but in upon a good boxing match. We should but have to exchange for the baser modern elements that batten upon sport a few Elizabethan rufflers, apt for a brawl and too handy with their daggers. But plays were then thought of as very good sport. They could be sport of the crudest kind too; more often than not they reeked and echoed with blood and thunder—a melodramatist of to-day would blush for it!—and were thick with such clowning as we relegate to a circus.

But there was this, besides, about that audience of 'prentices, courtiers, citizens, light ladies, and bullies. They could be stirred by the sound of poetry. And upon

that for a foothold a great drama was founded. Shakespeare, who was sensitive to most current things and let little that touched him pass unexpressed, has noted the comic incongruous extreme of the matter in the character of Antient Pistol—ruffian and coward, more highwayman than soldier, but a great theatre-goer evidently, for his swagger is to spout blank verse.

There would be more ways than one, then, of capturing such an audience. You could play down to it. Equally, though less easily doubtless, you could stir it to unwonted enthusiasms, for there is no susceptibility like this susceptibility to poetry. Shakespeare was a popular dramatist from the first, and, apparently, he never ceased to be one (though with occasions of failure, one may be sure, and it is not to be supposed that *Troilus and Cressida* had the vogue of *As You Like It*, or that Coriolanus was as quoted a character as Falstaff). But it is interesting to surmise how, without losing touch with his audiences, he yet developed his art, carrying them with him into unfamiliar regions of emotion and expression. For it is a far cry from the simple fun and simpler romance of *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* to the spiritual world of *King Lear* and to some of the talk in *Cymbeline*. It may be, though, that in the very latest plays he did "lose touch" a little. There are signs of it.

During Shakespeare's playwright's career, which ran from about 1591 to 1611, the physical features of theatre and stage changed somewhat. The process was probably the natural and common one, by which plays demanded new contrivances and these in turn suggested new devices for other plays. The whole question of the finally developed structure of the Elizabethan stage and the technical uses made of it is still one involving much dispute, and what is to be written here aims at no more than rough accuracy. The data are many, in the sense that each surviving play, seen in the light of its possible staging, contributes to them. But the fact that the change was, up to a point, very rapid, and the probability that each theatre was structurally developed to some extent upon the lines of its own convenience, makes more of the puzzle. Some few traditions of stagecraft had been inherited from the vanished and



*Photo : H. N. King.*

THE MONUMENT TO SHAKESPEARE IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

vanishing "mysteries" and moralities.[1] But the directest influence of the sort upon the newly professionalised drama was its use of the inn-yard for a theatre.

These yards were surrounded, as a rule, upon all four sides by balconies. Three sides of these and the ground accommodated the audience. On the fourth side stood the stage—projecting twenty feet or so, if that much room could be spared—while the balcony immediately above could be used as an upper stage, for the window of a house or the battlements of a castle, or to hold the musicians if need be. It was easily curtained, and from its lower edge could be hung the arras that backed the main stage itself. To this sort of setting the earlier Elizabethan plays were necessarily fitted. And the theatre buildings which prosperity soon provided, the Theatre (alone in its glory for a little, with no need of a more distinguishing name), and later the Globe, where Shakespeare's best work was done; the Fortune, the Rose, the Swan—what charming names they found for them!—merely turned it to better account. The actors in their fine clothes were now protected from sun and rain by a pent-house roof. The arras at the back was made to draw apart and disclose an inner stage. This was first used probably as a convenient place from which to bring forward to the outer stage such properties as tables and thrones and the big curtained beds of the time. Later, a part of the play's action would be carried on there, and, later still, something akin to painted scenery may have been set up, the curtains drawing to disclose it. This last possibility has been the subject of acrimonious dispute. But at some time or other the inner stage did begin to be so used. Our modern stage is its elaboration; while bit by bit—shrinking finally to the curved stage-front which exists in some theatres still—the rest of our Elizabethan inheritance has disappeared. Now this enlargement—as may easily be seen if a plan is drawn—necessarily led to the provision of other means of entrance than the platform in the inn-yard had allowed for, and two doors were placed at the side and back of the main stage. Side balconies were brought into use, too, so that the players

[1] This side of the question may be studied to the full in G. K. Chambers's *The Mediæval Stage.*

in them could both see what was happening on the inner stage and could be more conveniently talked to by the players below. At this point, though — but for the making of a few trap-doors and the machinery for the lowering of some visionary god from the regions of the roof—the structural development of Shakespeare's stage halted.

It is well to have this picture in one's mind, for many seeming oddities in the plays become simple and satisfactory in their setting. It can surely but help one's appreciation of any art to have in mind the immediate circumstances under which it flourished. It is quite vital to a full understanding of Shakespeare's plays that one should grasp the essentials of his stage-craft, should see how these were imposed upon him.

The plays, for instance, were performed as a rule in daylight. This in itself would rule out any mystery-making of a tricky kind. So whatever supernatural impression was to be made by the Ghosts in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, or the fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, must be due to the powers of the actors and the imagination of the audience.

Again, the main stage was thrust right out among the audience. Some of the audience, indeed, sat on the stage itself. This seems to us an outrageous proceeding, but the custom endured for a century or more. We must remember, though, that little or no pictorial illusion was being attempted, and always, in such a connection, that a theatrical convention is the most easily accepted or discarded of things. Italian actors still sometimes stop the play's action to return and bow after an applauded exit. In England, till a few years ago, plays and operas were performed with the auditorium lights turned full on, and opera-box conversation hardly ceased because the curtain had risen. At the best, then, an Elizabethan performance had to take account of an audience on three sides of it, while at the worst, one supposes, an actor might now and then be tripped up by the sword of some gallant gentleman who was more intent upon his own well-posed attitude than upon the play.

Now from this peninsulation of the stage several things

follow. The making of stage pictures was impossible, and graphic effects must be thought of, as it were, in the round. This led to an elaboration of the pageantry of fine dresses and stately movement. The dresses, to sustain such close inspection, had to be fine indeed. Large sums were spent on them. A king's costume might cost more than the writing of the play he appeared in ; though, truly, many of the authors were ill enough paid. Wealthy young nobles, however, who, still lacking such outlets for extravagance as our completer civilisation presents them with, spent unbelievable sums on their clothes, and would endow the theatre wardrobe now and then with their surplus. Such pageantry grew in favour. But no play of Shakespeare's seems to have been swamped with it till, for an elaborate production of *Henry VIII* (in the writing of which he had, indeed, but a part), the firing of a real gun fired the whole Globe Theatre, and the fine clothes—and Shakespeare's own manuscripts probably—were all burnt.

But when we read in *Antony and Cleopatra* " Canidius marcheth with his land army one way over the stage " we must picture a symbolic little procession ; half a dozen men-at-arms, perhaps, and a standard-bearer. If the men-at-arms marched well, though, and the standard-bearer bore his standard and himself as if they were—as in reality they are—the symbol of armed power and honour, this would suffice. The imagination of an Elizabethan audience was counted on for the rest.

## § 1

If an innocent and intelligent foreigner came to ask how, lacking everything but the " book of the words," he could best compass a general appreciation of Shakespeare, what plan could we make for him ? Or if a student, setting his mind free of all the casual and particular knowledge of the subject which must be tied up with any English education, were to want to start again free of it, what could we recommend ? Not, certainly, a haphazard dipping into that close-printed, crowded volume that is commonly labelled " Shakespeare," not even the choice of a masterpiece

or two. Let us try to make a list to fit just this particular purpose :

*A Midsummer Night's Dream.*
*Romeo and Juliet.*
*Henry IV*, Parts I and II.
*Twelfth Night.*
*Julius Cæsar.*
*Macbeth.*

That is a chronological list, almost. *Romeo and Juliet*, for reasons that will appear, is out of place. It takes us through all the " periods " of his writing but the last. Though it does not give us Shakespeare in his every mood, it follows the clear steps by which he ascended in his art. *Hamlet* is the notable omission. But *Hamlet* is in many ways unique—as a play, and as one of Shakespeare's plays—and is better considered alone. *King Lear* and *Antony and Cleopatra* are colossal ; let them be read separately too. *Othello* might have replaced *Macbeth* ; in the smaller sense it is a better play, in the larger one a lesser.

But the list aims only at such an approach to Shakespeare as will let us later feel instantly familiar with his work and thought wherever we touch it. Then, if we want entertainment and little more, we can take up *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, or *Much Ado about Nothing*. If our turn is for history, there is *Richard II*, *Richard III*, or *Henry V*. And, being quite familiar with our Shakespeare, we can try him in his harsher mood with *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida*, taste the beauty and mark the liveliness of his 'prentice work in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Comedy of Errors*, and take our ease with him—as he took his somewhat in the writing of them—with *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. And even then, there'll be a masterpiece and some half-masterpieces left.

And after *what* to read comes—for this limited purpose—*how*. Here is a suggestion which may involve the student—and even more, the innocent and intelligent foreigner—in a little trouble. Read each play for the first time aloud, as if it were simply music. The plan may involve a forbearing audience or a sound-proof room, but in the result it is worth the conquering of whatever self-consciousness may stand in

the way. It is not that the sound of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is as important as the sense, or should be or can be divorced from the sense. To say so would be simply perverse. But it is simply true that to divorce the sense from the sound is equivalent to transcribing such a lyric as Shelley's "Skylark" into prose.

And it is not enough for the student of Shakespeare to admit this in theory. In these days of novels and newspapers reading has become a semi-automatic business with most of us; the eye, that is to say, is accustomed to transmit, at a glance, the meaning of whole sentences to the brain. The words are telescoped into phrases and the sound of the words stays unaccounted for. This must be hard on all poetry; to dramatic poetry it is death. For the dramatist writes to be spoken, and his art is to make the tune and the time of the speeches as indicative of the character as their sense must be. The sound of a speech may sometimes be made to express far more than it would be dramatically right for its sense to convey. So much is as true in detail of prose. In poetic drama far more is involved. The play's whole temper must be influenced—is apt to be determined—by the sort of verse employed. And contrast between character and character, scene and scene (things vital both to content and form), is largely gained by the manœuvring as much of the sound as of the sense. Shakespeare sometimes does this obviously, by a shift from verse to prose, or by the use of rhymed couplets to end a scene.[1] In his maturity he makes far subtler use of it, to mark changes in the play's mood and to paint individual character. And to miss these effects is to miss not only their beauty but even perhaps to be misled in the play's meaning, when this hangs on their significance. So, as our modern habits of reading favour the omission to notice them, we must somehow force them into notice, however unreasonable the process may seen.

But in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, at least, the process will be nothing but a pleasant one. Set a child to read it through in a high, clear voice, shut your ears to the sense—

[1] The rhymed tag was also a conventional indication of an Act's end. Shakespeare is inconsistent in this use of it. But he often makes it serve him well when he needs a scene to finish brilliantly.



*From the painting by Chas. A. Buchel.* *By permission of the late Mr. A. Bourchier.*

MR. A. BOURCHIER AS SHYLOCK IN *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.*

if you could !—and open them to the sound, and it is hardly delusive to say that you could divine as much sheer music in it as in a Mozart symphony. But of course the meaning is so simple, so clear, so innately wedded to the words, that it will not be missed. For all that, though, there are passages that must first impress your hearing; if we let them in by any other door the beauty can never be the same.

> . . . O happy fair,
> Your eyes are lodestars! and your tongue's sweet air,
> More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear
> When wheat is green, and hawthorn buds appear.

Sound and sense are wedded, the sense is simple. But shut your eyes and speak it aloud—in one of London's November fogs, in the hot tropics, among New England snows—and, by sound and sense combined, do you not find your own senses in touch with the English Spring ?

Read the duet that begins :

> Ay me! for aught that ever I could read,
> Could ever hear by tale or history,
> The course of true love never did run smooth. . . .

It is charming. But one must read it as a duet and imagine the two voices blending, or the full charm is lost.

When the first fairy voice is heard :

> Over hill, over dale,
> Thorough bush, thorough brier,
> Over park, over pale,
> Thorough flood, thorough fire,
> I do wander everywhere,
> Swifter than the moone's sphere.

The trip of the verse must be light and right ; and the soft treble,

> Swifter than the moone's sphere,

must be bird-like.

Hark to the sound of Oberon's fantastic anger :

> Tarry, rash wanton! am I not thy lord ?

and to Titania's preposterous jealousy of

> . . . the bouncing Amazon,
> Your buskin'd mistress and your warrier love.

How the dainty thing spits it at him !

Listen to the gentle weariness of Lysander's

> Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood,
> And to speak troth, I have forgot our way;
> We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,
> And tarry for the comfort of the day.

Taste the mischievous vigour of Puck's

> Up and down, up and down,
> I will lead them up and down.
> I am feared in field and town.
> Goblin, lead them up and down.

There's nothing particular in that bit of jingle, one may say, except that it happens to be poetically and dramatically precisely right for its purpose.

Listen again when the brisk hunting horns break into the " still " fairy music and disperse the mists of the dream —to the heroic notes of Hippolyta's

> I was with Hercules and Cadmus once
> When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the boar
> With hounds of Sparta; never did I hear
> Such gallant chiding; for besides the groves,
> The skies, the fountains, every region near
> Seemed all one mutual cry. I never heard
> So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

And then to the deeper tone of Theseus:

> My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
> So flew'd, so sanded, and their heads are hung
> With ears that sweep away the morning dew;
> Crook-knee'd, and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls;
> Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,
> Each under each.

And above all do not miss—just because he is called a comic character—the simplicity and charm of Bottom's immortal

> Let me play the lion too. I will roar, that it will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say, " Let him roar again, let him roar again."

Having taught our ears due observance of the tunes and harmonies, the shifts of time and key between speech and

speech and scene and scene (though one must not press these parallels between one act and another too far), nothing stands between us and the easiest enjoyment of the play. The archaisms are few, and though the fun of the rustic interlude is (unhappily) not so immediate for us as it was to the Elizabethans, we need not miss the spirit of it if we look for no more than it offers, if we shake free from that disastrous modern town-bred habit of supposing that a country clown and a circus clown are the same.

§ 2

Shakespeare wrote nothing more perfect of its kind than *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* One might indeed say—and defend the position—that he wrote nothing of any kind that was so perfect. And he wrote nothing more of its kind, for *Love's Labour's Lost*, its true companion, is an earlier work. The perfection of the play lies in the fact that its subject and substance and method are so suited. Its inspiration is lyrical, and no touch of the main story and no character in it is too heavy for a lyric to bear. Theseus, the classic hero, is a figment, but he is meant to be. Hippolyta is a shadow of what the name must suggest. They are there only to heighten the romance of the lovers in the wood, and to add dignity to the wedding—which was more than the play's end in the sense that the play itself was assuredly written for the celebration of some great wedding feast. Was there ever such a party given! And the four lovers are not much more substantial or complex in character than the fairy king and queen; rightly, for it is all a fairy play.

We pass now to *Romeo and Juliet.* This is earlier work and, for all its beauties, cruder work. And the conventions of its emotional expression will often be strange to us; we shall need to make allowance for them.

Note the effect of the opening scene; the progression from the comic prose of the quarrelling servants to the Prince's sounding verse. In a few hundred words Shakespeare gives us the family feud at full pitch, the men, the masters and their wives, and Verona's own share in the

trouble. Mark how, even before this, the very first words of the chorus strike for us the keynote of the play.

> Two households, both alike in dignity,
> In Fair Verona. . . .

A piece of technique that Shakespeare learned early and never lost was to put his auditors upon the right track of scene and character, without delay. But the whole story, helped by the verse, seems to move swiftly and easily, the first act culminating in the charming action of the dance and closing with the perfect passage after Romeo has been recognised—we must picture as we read it the maskers departing with their torches,[1] and the two figures left alone!

> *Juliet.* My only love sprung from my only hate:
> Too early seen unknown, and known too late!
> Prodigious birth of love it is to me,
> That I must love a loathed enemy.
> *Nurse.* What's this, what's this?
> *Juliet.* A rime I learn'd even now
> Of one I danc'd withal. [*One calls within,* "*Juliet.*"
> *Nurse.* Anon, anon!
> Come let's away; the strangers are all gone.

Nothing in this first act need strike the most "modern" of us as strange, unless it be the fantasy of the talk in the scenes between Romeo, Benvolio, and Mercutio, and their extreme addiction to punning. But we must remember that—apart from such talk being dramatically suited to Romeo's self-conscious humour—this was all in the literary, if not in the actual, conversational fashion of the day (for people who were quick enough to indulge in it). And puns were not then in discredit. They were not thought of as poor jokes, or even necessarily as jokes at all. The English language was, to cultured Elizabethans, like a new-found and wonderful inheritance. And they revelled in it, they sported with it in every conceivable way. But it did not occur to them—until the game wore thin—that they were degrading it by doing so. They played upon words romantically, emotionally. Shakespeare seems to have

[1] Modern editions, with no authority from the Folio, mark their "exeunt" ten lines or so too early, and spoil the effect. Modern producers, however, generally show more sense.

wearied of the practice very soon; he probably found the dramatic effect too superficial for him. But even in his maturer and most serious work puns may be found.[1]

It is, however, later on in the play that these conventions most affect our modern sense of literary propriety. A play upon *ideas* we can reconcile with the genuine expression of emotion. Juliet's

> And learn me how to lose a winning match

is not disturbing. But, a few lines later, her

> Hath Romeo slain himself? Say thou but I,
> And that bare vowel "I" shall poison more
> Than the death-darting eye of cockatrice;
> I am not I, if there be such an I;
> Or those eyes shut that make the answer I.
> If he be slain, say "I," or if not no
> Brief sounds determine of my weal or woe.

does perhaps make it hard for us to be as sympathetic as we'd like to be. Romeo, under the same strain of emotion, tends to drop his juggling. But even he, close upon:

> . . . more courtship lives
> In carrion flies than Romeo; they may seize
> On the white wonder of dear Juliet's hand,

must add

> Flies may do this, but I from this must fly.

It is noticeable, though, how, as the tragedy develops, Shakespeare's grasp is firmer. Take the scene of parting, which begins:

> Wilt thou be gone? it is not yet near day.

Compare it with the balcony scene. The hall-mark of genius in that (incidentally, it is the hall-mark, too, of the lovers' true love) lies not in its much-quoted rhetorical

[1] Now is it Rome indeed and room enough.
*Julius Cæsar*, Act I.

And—though modern taste likes to dispute it—Lady Macbeth's:

> I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,
> For it must seem their guilt.

beauties, but — to the present writer's mind — in the simplicity of the last twenty-five lines.

*Juliet.* Romeo!
*Romeo.* My dear.
*Juliet.* At what o'clock to-morrow
Shall I send to thee?
*Romeo.* At the hour of nine.
*Juliet.* I will not fail; 'tis twenty years till then.
I have forgot why I did call thee back.
*Romeo.* Let me stand here till thou remember it.
*Juliet.* I shall forget, to have thee still stand there,
Remembering how I love thy company.
*Romeo.* And I'll still stay, to have thee still forget,
Forgetting any other home but this.

And so, perfectly, to the end. And when, later, they part, their happiness all ended, the lyric note is still sounded, the themes are the same—sun, moon, and the song of birds—but now they are transformed. The tone of the verse is deeper, its measure firmer and slower, and the speeches turn always to reality:

I must be gone and live or stay and die.

Her reckless

Therefore stay yet; thou needst not to be gone.

With his answer

How is't, my soul? Let's talk, it is not day.

But, again, her

O! now be gone; more light and light it grows.

And from now on Shakespeare plays with words for their own sake no more. There is the pathetic little passage between Juliet and Paris, in which she tries to mask her misery by joining in the usual game of equivoque; but that has its dramatic purpose. And in the Juliet, told by the nurse to marry Paris, the Juliet of—

Speakest thou from thy heart?
*Nurse.* And from my soul too;
Or else beshrew them both.
*Juliet.* Amen!
*Nurse.* What?
*Juliet.* Well, thou hast comforted me marvellous much. . . .

Shakespeare has truly found out "how to do it."

Even more remarkable, from the point of view of his art's development, is the Romeo of the last act, and the means by which the figure is given its tragic stature. For the first time Shakespeare makes free use of the irony which was to serve his genius so well in maturer work. The act opens with an immediate stroke of it. The scene in the tomb, Romeo's bitter embracing of the still living Juliet, supposing her dead, his own death in her arms, is the most tragic irony. And touches like

> Well, Juliet, I will lie with thee to-night,

and even the more didactic lines to the apothecary :

> There is thy gold, worse poison to men's souls

are dramatic master-strokes. Above all, from the point of view of Shakespeare's art, we should notice Romeo's reception of the news of Juliet's supposed death :

> Is it e'en so ? then I defy you, stars !

This is the maturest touch in the play. In this Shakespeare has mastered the secret of making the unspoken thing count with the spoken. No need to tell the actor what to do. He has but to reach the right expression of those nine words by legitimate means, and in doing so he will have silently conveyed a page of phrased emotion—and as no phrasing could convey it. Years later he paralleled this effect in *Macbeth* with

> She should have died hereafter,
> There would have been a time for such a word.

Apart from its beauties and charm, which hold us to-day as they held the first audiences (for the play was a great success), there is much else of interest to the student in *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare's own discovery, for instance, in the course of writing of Mercutio. The famous " Queen Mab " speech is an attractive bit of decorative verse ; but it might have been allotted to anyone. Mercutio's death scene, however, is quite another matter. The very ineptitudes of the play are interesting. But fine strokes and ineptitudes both, the most interesting thing is to discover them for ourselves.

§ 3

We must give but a very few words to the two Histories on our list, for the topic will so easily widen beyond our compass. They are Shakespeare's most individual contributions to this then very popular dramatic form. The three parts of *Henry VI* were but in part—and possibly in very small part—his. In *Richard III* the influence of his collaborator is still strong with him. *Richard II* and *King John* are all his own, and he does what perhaps no other writer could have done with them, but what he does is what other writers would probably have attempted and might have carried through well enough. But for the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*, though he took what was indeed a recognised pattern for such plays, he so invigorated it as to give it quite new significance. The great dramatic virtue of these plays is that they not only tell the historical tale of great events, but that they picture the life and mind of common folk in relation to them. And the centre of this achievement, of course, is the figure of Falstaff.

Like most of the great figures of fiction, he grew startlingly under his creator's hand.[1] From the Falstaff of Gadshill (good as he is) to the philosopher of the speech upon honour and of the scenes and soliloquies of Part II, is a genius's journey. It is by no means a bad plan, as a preliminary, to read the Falstaff scenes through by themselves. Then when in the midst of the pageant of events we have to imagine the huge figure come rolling on the stage, it may the more readily strike us with that friendly familiarity which the good actor can embody. This will help us, too, to resist the inevitable temptation—having once yielded to it—to skip the long screeds of verse in Part II in favour of Falstaff's next appearance. It is worth remarking how well Shakespeare himself kept him in hand. He is brought to the

[1] Don Quixote, Pickwick. Strange to think that in England and in Spain within five years of each other Shakespeare and Cervantes should be apostrophising chivalry by means of two such antithetical figures. This has been, no doubt, often enough remarked upon and, almost certainly, though not to the present writer's knowledge, the comparison widened to embrace Spanish and English reactions in general to these dying ideals and the new mind that each nation was making for itself. An attractive subject.



*Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.* *Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Manchester.*

"PRINCE ARTHUR AND HUBERT," BY W. F. YEAMES R.A.

*Arthur.* O, spare mine eyes,
Though to no use but still to look on you!
*King John*, Act IV, Scene 1.

fringe of the serious business of the play, but, except in one instance, not entangled in it. And the one instance—when he maltreats the dead body of Hotspur—is an artistic blemish that has been the bane of many a producer of the play.

It is superfluous to praise Falstaff. He says of himself that he is not only witty but the cause of wit in other men. We may enlarge his meaning. He is the very idea of humour personified. He is the revelation of a natural force. The least Falstaffian of us have a share in him ; or, if we have not, so much the worse for our humanity. And here, perhaps, is the point of Prince Hal's relations to him, and the purely dramatic purpose of the character.

The paradox of Prince Hal has been much canvassed ; he has been as big a worry to Shakespeare's commentators as he was to his own father. How could he keep such company, say the Puritans ! And having had his fun with Falstaff, say the moralists, how could he treat him so scurvily ! The answer, surely, is simple. But though we make it with confidence, we need not suppose that either questions or answers on these points ever occurred to Shakespeare himself—ever occurred, that is to say, as abstractions. For the dramatist's answer to any " How could he have done it ? " will always be " He did." But as critics and for our own purposes let us survey the " sympathetic " scheme of the play (so to call it) and its adjustment.

We have Henry IV, troubled by the thought of the " by-paths and indirect, crook'd ways " by which he met his crown, clashing with Hotspur and Northumberland, who excuse their rebellion on those very grounds. And Henry mourns his son is not a Hotspur.

> To pluck bright honour from the pale-fac'd moon,

but instead, matched to

> . . . such inordinate and low desires . .
> Such barren pleasures, rude society.

What can his future be ?

Hotspur is a brilliant character and most brilliantly done. He is the driving force of the first part of the play.

The scenes with his father and uncle, with his wife, with Glendower are magnificent. "This tune goes manly" (to quote a later play) indeed. But Shakespeare can't quite love him. He is allowed little unsympathetic traits. He'd

> . . . rather be a kitten and cry "mew"
> Than one of these same metre ballad-mongers.

And then, when the pinch comes! his father is "grievous sick."

> Zounds! how has he the leisure to be sick
> In such a justling time?

And for all his chivalry he despises Prince Harry. He resents and disbelieves the story of his reformation. He is jealous of him; he asks if the challenge to single combat was made "in contempt." And his last words before they do fight are

> I can no longer brook thy vanities.

But note Prince Harry's over his dead body:

> . . . Fare thee well, great heart!
> Ill-weav'd ambition, how much art thou shrunk!
> When that this body did contain a spirit
> A kingdom for it was too small a bound;
> But now two paces of the vilest earth
> Is room enough; this earth, that bears thee dead,
> Bears not alive so stout a gentleman.

And then—but then!—when he sees the supposed corpse of old Falstaff, the lecher, the winebibber, the coward:

> . . . Poor Jack, farewell,
> I could have better spar'd a better man.

It is all quite clear, surely. Shakespeare means charity, and what we call common humanity, to win.[1]

And finally—to be done with this aspect of the play—when Henry takes on himself the crown, he takes it sadly. He is dreadfully sincere with the dying king.

> Accusing it, I put it on my head,
> To try with it, as with an enemy
> That had before my face murder'd my father,
> The quarrel of a true inheritor.

[1] The historical question is neither here nor there. Shakespeare did not desert history, but he moulded his characters to fit it.

> But if it did infect my blood with joy,
> Or swell my thoughts to any strain of pride;
> If any rebel or vain spirit of mine
> Did with the least affection of a welcome
> Give entertainment to the might of it,
> Let God for ever keep it from my head
> And make me as the poorest vassal is
> That doth with awe and terror kneel to it!

With no self-righteousness in his heart, indeed, Henry V must pass into a world where good-fellowship can count for little, a grimmer and unkinder world. But he'll play his part there as it is written for him. Shakespeare's "All the world's a stage," his constant comparison of life to the mimic life of the theatre, was not an idle one.

There is, of course, much else to note about these twin plays. In general, they are written, it would seem, upon a flowing tide of success (not worldly success—though that they brought—but success in artistry) and confidence. The verse flows smoothly. Bombast (that sign in so sensitive a writer as Shakespeare of strain and anxiety) has vanished. In fact, the bombastic Glendower is a figure of fun. Pistol is one of nature's burlesques, and even Northumberland (in Part II, Act i) is accused upon very small provocation of indulging in "strained passion."

Shakespeare is now attending carefully to the structural balance of his plays, and, as we have seen, to the sympathetic balance too. Henry IV is not let die on the stage; it would give him too tragic an importance. Prince Henry is carefully kept clear of all connection with the scandalous treachery by which Lancaster and Westmoreland dispose of the Archbishop's rebellion. In that scene, by the way (Part II, Act iv, sc. 2), let us note the convention of time which Shakespeare quite naturally adopts. An army is dispersed in three minutes, just as Capulet's ball consisted of one dance and no more.

Many details are worth remarking. Falstaff was, as one may say, always on the point of escaping from his creator's hands, such life had he given him. At the end of Part I it looks as if Shakespeare meant to reform him.

**If I do grow great, I'll grow less; for I'll purge, and leave sack, and live cleanly as a nobleman should do.**

And the Epilogue to Part II promises us more of him than *Henry V* fulfils.

Ancient Pistol is not only one of nature's burlesques, but is he not (*was* this intentional ?) an outrageous burlesque of Hotspur ?

A quite important matter to notice is how the story of *Richard II* is kept alive throughout the two plays, and how the ending of each—especially the unconventional end of Part II—is contrived to carry us over to the interest of the plays to come.

The comic parts are full of topical allusions, some of which are easy to master, some of which must escape us. We can never hope to laugh at the Falstaff scenes quite as the Elizabethans did. But just a little trouble will help us with :

*Falstaff.* Where's Bardolph ?

*Page.* He's gone into Smithfield to buy your worship a horse [*i.e.* to the meat market—or to the knackers].

*Falstaff.* I bought him in Paul's [In the nave of St. Paul's servants used to wait for hire, idlers, rufflers, and pickpockets too], and he'll buy me a horse in Smithfield : an I could get me but a wife in the stews, I were manned, horsed, and wived.

And, for the pick of the scenes—for the pick of all such scenes in Shakespeare—what is there to touch the arrest of Falstaff, the pricking of the recruits, and the dinner at Shallow's house ? What can beat Dame Quickly's description of Falstaff sitting in her Dolphin chamber, or Doll Tearsheet's apostrophe to him,

> Thou whoreson little tidy Bartholomew boar-pig,

Shallow's mourning for old Double, Davy's defence of that arrant knave Visor,

> I did not think Master Silence had been a man of this mettle,

or

> Puff ! Puff in thy teeth, most recreant coward base,

and

> Master Shallow, I owe you a thousand pound ?

Heavens, how the thing lives !

§ 4

*Twelfth Night* and *Julius Cæsar* were probably written and, rather more certainly, produced within a year of each other (1599–1600). *Twelfth Night* is the last of the three mature comedies. It seems to have been, alike from its title and from a certain carelessness in its composition, an "occasional" piece—just as, presumably, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was—and it is guessed that, upon the success of *Much Ado About Nothing* and *As You Like It*, Shakespeare was commanded to write the play, to be performed, as custom prescribed, before Queen Elizabeth upon "Twelfth Day at night."

Choosing a modern epithet, one might well describe *Twelfth Night* as the most charming of the plays. It shows great forthrightness in the writing. Shakespeare has found a good story and he sets it out with practised clarity. But the earlier scenes are detached and rather thin. It is not till Viola and Olivia meet that he really grapples with his theme. One might even pitch upon the very line that lifts the play into life, Viola's

> I see you what you are, you are too proud.

It at least lifts Viola into a proud position among the heroines of drama. Shakespeare has found what every dramatist wants in a play and a scene, contrast of circumstance, clash of temperament. Here is Olivia, the exquisite, disdainful creature, pampered with everything the world can give, but cloistered and unadvised, and a child in the world's ways. And here is Viola, shipwrecked in every meaning of the word, with the heartbreak of a hopeless love to add to all other troubles, facing the wide world with courage, with a pathetic merriment. The obvious dramatic situation, in which the girl is sent to be a wooer for the man she herself loves, is good enough, but how it is transcended in its playing out by such characters! Viola never fails her creator, nor he her. As to Olivia, the story lands him in difficulties; or rather, perhaps, it is his carelessness with this part of the story that does so. Character and circumstance can account for her impulsive wooing of the disguised Cesario. This begins well enough, but degenerates

into a repetition of effects, and ends far too mechanically with the hurried marriage to Sebastian. Orsino suffers even more in the working out of the play. Shakespeare makes him, and manages to keep him, a fine figure for the best part of two acts. It is true that he is, as one says, a bit of a stick; a shade too self-conscious, but placed, poor man, in a false position. Nevertheless Shakespeare could have done more with him; moreover, it is likely, meant to do more. The lines in the last act about "The Egyptian thief at point of death" seem to be what remains of the fine tragical scenes that were to have been written for him, now desperately rounded up to make a timely end to the play.

For the truth is that Shakespeare found the comic characters of his invention better worth than the story he started with. Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Malvolio, Feste, Fabian, and Maria, comedy set in the fantastic gloom of Olivia's household; this gives the play its most characteristic colour and life. It needs no analysis; comment on it seems superfluous. The humour carries us along upon a tide of laughter, a tide so strong that it sweeps Orsino aside, as we've noticed, Olivia at times into a half-regarded corner, and would tend to swamp even Viola if Shakespeare did not contrive to catch her in the fun.[1]

There is irony as well as fun in the figure of Malvolio; but the irony Shakespeare did not live to recognise. He is sometimes, says Maria, a kind of a Puritan. And, chirps up Sir Andrew,

> . . if I thought that, I'd beat him like a dog

Says Sir Toby,

> Dost thou think because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?

This was good theatrical gibing at the sour-faced crew. But fifty years later the jest had come true. There were few enough cakes and ale in England, and no theatres at all. The Puritans had revenged many a Malvolio. The character, though, makes one instance among many of

[1] In many modern productions, though, the undue and unnecessary elaboration of the comic scenes makes the disproportion of the play far worse than it is left by Shakespeare's own miscalculation.

Shakespeare's development of a conscience towards the creatures of his creation. He condemns the unpleasant fellow to mockery and a madhouse. But the madhouse scene is not altogether a joke.

I think nobly of the soul,

says Malvolio suddenly in the midst of it. And the line strikes a chord of conscience in us as its inspiration struck one, we may hazard, in Shakespeare. And thereafter Malvolio is a figure of fun no more. He leaves us, not liking him indeed, but feeling just a little ashamed of ourselves.

The play is peppered with allusions more or less topical. Of some we must miss the point. What lies in that occult

The lady of the Strachy married the yeoman of the wardrobe

who shall say? And probably there was for the Elizabethan audience a sting in Sir Toby's

Nay, if you be an undertaker I'm for you

which it lacks for us. But the fact that Sir Andrew is a knight

dubbed with unhatched rapier and on carpet consideration

need not pass us by. And when we hear he has

the back trick simply as strong as any man in Illyria,

if he but skips as he says it, we need not even mentally translate it into fox-trot to enjoy our laugh.

Such a happy crew as they are! Truly, Sir Toby, the old ruffian, does get drunk of a morning. We may like to believe that if it weren't for that sunstroke he had campaigning, his head would be stronger. For he's not all sot. He stands up to Antonio, a formidable customer. We may wish, indeed, that he had not been dear to Sir Andrew "some two thousand strong or so," and even more that he did not turn on the poor innocent in the end with his

Ass-head and a coxcomb and a knave, a thin-faced knave, a gull.

But we may previse that he was rash in his marriage bargain, that Maria, Lady Belch, will bring him up with a round turn, that he *will* find himself coming in "earlier o' nights" in future.

And who could ever be angry with Sir Andrew? He is perfect fool, complete coward, and gull. But picture his face when his adored and trusted Sir Toby tells him that truth. And how charming he is! And what manners! His "good Mistress Mary Accost" and—with a bow to that benighted old swashbuckler—his

> And yet I will not compare with an old man.

And when Sir Toby—his tiny, mischievous Maria having kissed her hands to him and away—puffs his old chest and pulls his moustache with

> She's a beagle, true bred, and one that adores me; what o' that?

who can resist the pathos of

> I was adored once, too!

Sir Andrew was a fool, but Sir Andrew was a gentleman.

Nor is there any need to speak of the verse. Open the play where we will, of itself almost it sings to us. It is Shakespeare at his most melodious. And it is tinged throughout with a pathos which gives to the play—one hazards—a charm that the robuster *As You Like It* and *Much Ado About Nothing* lack. Whether it be Orsino's beginning

> If music be the food of love, play on

or Viola's

> Make me a willow cabin at your gate

or Olivia's

> O world! how apt the poor are to be proud

or any one of fifty other passages that could be found, they all have this peculiar beauty, which Shakespeare never quite hit on again, though he did greater things. And the immortal:

> A blank, my lord. She never told her love,
> But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
> Feed on her damask cheek: she pin'd in thought,
> And with a green and yellow melancholy
> She sat like Patience on a monument,
> Smiling at grief.

There is magic in that: what other word will fit? For analyse and sum up the beauty of thought and language and still you do not account for its peculiar power to charm us. It is only once in a while that even the greatest poets can weave this spell.

§ 5

*Julius Cæsar* is a play of power. It is a fine play. Had Shakespeare written it and then written no more, he could still have been called the first dramatist of his time. But it has a further interest for us in that it is a prologue to work that lets us call him (though hyperbole is poor appreciation) the greatest dramatist the world has ever seen. What intimate workings of his nature were involved in the change is idle guessing. But in *Julius Cæsar* the student may add to the playgoer's enjoyment the noting of the things that mark it as the springboard from which the leap was taken to *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

The play will seem to us in some ways more "modern" than most of its fellows. We are not Elizabethan-minded enough to get the full flavour of the Comedies, and the matter of the Histories is strange matter to us as it was not to Shakespeare—no such gap of understanding divided him as divides us from Bosworth and Agincourt. But he, looking out from the little England of his day, sees the Romans much as we do after two centuries and more have taught us what Empire meant—and means, its greater power and its larger freedom. And in this we can mark his genius, and mark too the genesis of the power in the man which keeps his greater work a stimulus to men's minds still. Plutarch threw open the gates of a wider world vision to him, and his imagination passed through. This it is that gives *Julius Cæsar* its importance in the whole fabric of his work. The subject gave him an horizon which he never lessened; from this time on his heroes' spirits move in larger spaces. It may seem strange that Shakespeare, who took ideas from everybody (in these days he would have been damned as a plagiarist) could yet never learn the essential thing about them but from himself and

in his own time. It might seem strange if we did not find it true of all real learning.

These classics had been always open to him, and Roman history was a common quarry for his fellow-playwrights; he had once put a tentative foot in it himself. But not till the theme moved him whole-heartedly would he bestir himself. But then with what ease he moves! The play rises in one sweep to an heroic height—to Cæsar's murder—and he holds it there. He is writing still with the firm directness of the later Histories. Cassius may be compared with Hotspur, but he is far from Hotspur.

> I cannot tell what you and other men
> Think of this life; but, for my single self,
> I had as lief not be as live to be
> In awe of such a thing as I myself.
> I was born free as Cæsar; so were you.

That is a new voice, echoing from quite another world. Shakespeare does but give it body, maybe; but he makes it ring true. And Cæsar's

> Let me have men about me that are fat:
> Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights
> Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;
> He thinks too much: such men are dangerous. . .

Read the rest of that and on through Casca's scene. There is a tone in it all—an elder tone of disillusion staved off by mockery, but of courage too under the burdens of the mind, different, how far, from the hopes and fears in which Henry IV and V lived and moved?

And so throughout the play. Its keynotes are such things as Portia's scene with Brutus:

> I grant I am a woman, but withal
> A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife.
> I grant I am a woman, but withal
> A woman well-reputed, Cato's daughter.
> Think you I am no stronger than my sex
> Being so father'd and so husbanded?

And Cæsar's

> Cowards die many times before their death,
> The valiant never taste of death but once.

> Of all the wonders that I yet have heard
> It seems to me most strange that men should fear,
> Seeing that death, a necessary end,
> Will come when it will come.

As Antony's

> O mighty Cæsar, dost thou lie so low,
> Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
> Shrunk to this little measure ? . . .

As Brutus' reproach to the reckless Cassius :

> . . . What ! shall one of us
> That struck the foremost man of all this world
> But for supporting robbers, shall we now
> Contaminate our fingers with base bribes
> And sell the mighty space of our large honours
> For so much trash as may be grasped thus ?

And as the closing

> This was the noblest Roman of them all.

There are certain things in the story — such as the suicides that mark its end—with which, it seems, Shakespeare cannot assimilate his sympathies; and it is instructive to note how comparatively ineffective these things at once become. Set them beside other passages in the play which should have no finer effect, and they appear perfunctory. The play sags towards the end in consequence. By the time *Antony and Cleopatra* came to be written, Shakespeare was master of this matter.

But as marks of his still growing mastery of the theatre we should note how the whole play is drawn together in an unity of effect ; how he uses every resource of words to paint an atmosphere of dark and dread for the night before the killing ; how skilfully he marshals his poetry and prose, his mob and his senators, to make contrast ; and how he uses all his armoury of "knocks" and music, "a low march within," the sound of the song fading away as Lucius falls asleep before the ghost of Cæsar comes, and the loud alarums of the battle—uses all these things for their full effect.

It is a very spacious play.

§ 6

Finally we come to *Macbeth*. Much has been said about it —it has been named, though not conclusively, as the greatest of the tragedies—and we cannot say much now within our allotted space. If it is not the greatest, it certainly is the grimmest; the most unrelenting in its show of evil.

It is worth while to read this through first of all—as we planned with the earlier plays—for the sake of its tunes and harmonies; partly that we may recognise to the full the sheer musical difference between

> . . . Light thickens, and the crow
> Makes wing to the rooky wood"

and (say) the youthful:

> Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds
> Towards Phœbus' lodging; such a waggoner
> As Phæthon would whip you to the west
> And bring in cloudy night immediately

And partly that we may discover how—having achieved such complete mastery over words—Shakespeare will now sometimes use them but as a sounding-board or little more, for a meaning that quite transcends their unaided sense. A magic use of words indeed! It may even be said that in these later plays he grew impatient of language. He wanted, on occasion, to give his actors weapons of words with which to batter—reason apart, if need be—upon the emotions of their audience. And if syntax interfered and would weaken the effect, so much the worse for syntax.

When Macbeth mutters

> To know my deed 'twere best not know myself

neither actor nor audience need trouble to parse the sentence; its effective meaning comes home. When Lady Macbeth, her mind hissing and coiling, like a snake preparing to strike, says:

> . . . Thou'dst have, great Glamis,
> That which cries, "Thus thou must do, if thou have it";
> And that which rather thou dost fear to do
> Than wishest should be undone.

it is hard (even after settling what the true text should be;

a matter of some dispute) for the hearer to discover an exact meaning. But any Lady Macbeth can convey to her audience—for all that she may rightly wish the meaning came clearer—what her fears of Macbeth are. This habit of writing, it may be added, tended to grow on him till in his very latest plays he relapses to it without the excuse of emotional pressure; the result then being at times a tiresome, if musical, incoherence.

The text of *Macbeth* is in itself a difficulty. Our sole authority for it is the first Folio, and there it is worse printed than most of the plays. But besides this it is practically certain that whole scenes in it are not Shakespeare's at all. No responsible opinion holds that he wrote Hecate; it is quite likely that his work does not begin till Macbeth's entrance with

> So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

The play's unrelieved gloom, it would appear, lessened its popularity, and Middleton, probably—a good enough dramatist in his way—was brought in to liven it up with a few songs and dances. We must remember that in those days a play was as much the property of the theatre that produced it as were the clothes it was performed in. Middleton did more than was called for, doubtless. He may have tagged a speech or two with a more cheery couplet. But it is in the last degree unlikely that Shakespeare opened the play with Macbeth's appearance; the material of the preceding scene is probably Shakespeare's, though it is mauled almost past recognition.

Again, it seems certain that the play was written with an eye to the special approbation of James I. This is betokened by the Scottish story and the witches, but more especially by the reference to Banquo's royal descendants and the speech about touching for the King's Evil. And this has an importance apart from its interest to the student. When James came to England one of the things, it would appear, that the English courtiers were proudest to show him was the English drama. And he was not slow to patronise it. Kings and queens did not go to the theatre in those days. But in the winter of 1604–5 no fewer than seven of Shakespeare's plays were given at Whitehall. And

*Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear* took their place with the Comedies as entertainments that a king and his court might be expected to enjoy.

The greatest of Shakespeare's plays this may not be. But he wrote nothing more terrific—in the true sense of that word—than the two sections containing Duncan's murder and Banquo's. Read and feel and picture and think over, and then again think over and picture and feel and read from "Enter Lady Macbeth, reading a letter" to

> . . . there's warrant in the theft
> Which steals itself when there's no mercy left;

and (noting the little breathing space of the scene between the old man and Rosse and Macduff) from :

> Thou hast it now; King, Cawdor, Glamis, all

to

> . . . We are yet but young in deed,

and see if you can exhaust the tragic effect of them. It will exhaust you sooner. *Macbeth* is indeed the tragedy of unchecked will destroying itself, as *Hamlet* is the tragedy of unready will wasting itself.

The first section of the two is the easier to picture. It is all the more explicit. The salient thing, perhaps, about Lady Macbeth, who is its motive-power, even more than her fixity of purpose, is her terrible clarity of vision. She not only sees how the deed can be done, but she sees each aspect of it in terms of such simplicity. She has a little doubt, apparently, as to whether her sex will not physically unfit her for this sort of thing :

> . . . come to my woman's breasts
> And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers

is her apostrophe. But when she finds that the wine which muddles men's heads only makes hers clearer, that she can stand and listen quite coolly while Macbeth commits the murder that she has made no mistake in doing her own part, it is with a dreadful, almost with a childish eagerness of daring, that she says :

> . . . Had he not resembled
> My father as he slept I'd done't. . . .

And when Macbeth stands broken, body and spirit, for the moment by the horror of his deed, she turns on him coolly, steadily, with :

> . . . Infirm of purpose !
> Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead
> Are but as pictures ; 'tis the eye of childhood
> That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed
> I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,
> For it must seem their guilt.

And she goes and does it without a tremor. Macbeth is as guilty at heart, but his mind backs and fills—as a boat's sail will in a doubtful wind—with misgivings and remorse. Her word is just :

> How easy is it, then !

In all the happiness of peace after victory—a victory that Macbeth has won for him—Duncan comes to the castle. The calm beauty of sunset symbolises for us the happy confidence in which he comes. He is greeted by his " honoured hostess," he kisses her, as the custom was (one wonders if her cheek was cold), and passes in with his little train. We must imagine the torches that cross the courtyard, the lighted rooms that we glimpse, the music playing while the king sups. Later come the few words of goodnight to the troubled Banquo, then the stillness of the sleeping house and the tinkling of the bell that calls Macbeth to his work in the dark. And while the short night passes, two shadows of evil pass in and out of the courtyard. The knocking on the gate begins and grows louder and louder till it rouses the jovial porter, who cracks his jokes as he pulls on his clothes. The dawn comes.

Mark how Shakespeare brings in a new character and strikes a new note for the discovery of the murder. Macduff has come to the castle with Duncan, but he has not spoken before. It is his voice—the voice of a conscience-free, courageous man—that rings out with the news, that leads the chorus of amazement and horror. Mark, too, his quick direct question to Macbeth, when he hears that the blood-stained grooms have been killed. After this he falls almost silent ; throws but a word and a glance towards Lady Macbeth, who has fainted or pretends to. We must see

him with a steady eye on Macbeth and a very sceptical ear for his verbose protestations. Still, he's a shrewd man. He sees, as do Duncan's two sons, that Macbeth has the game in his hands. They are all in his castle and in his power. The king is past his help. He bides his time and goes. Banquo and Rosse and Lennox make peace with their consciences. Malcolm and Donalbain escape. Macbeth has won his crown.

All this has been plain sailing enough, but in the next section we must look well behind the words. We must hear in the simple speech of Banquo :

> Thou hast it now; King, Cawdor, Glamis, all . . .

the tone of the kindly good man tempted by the benefit of another's ill deeds. We must see Macbeth as King, weighted with splendour, his very speech pallid and hollow and cold. Observe the curious emptiness of his lines to Banquo as he sends him to his death, and listen to the ominous beat in " Ride you this afternoon ? " " Fail not our feast." " Goes Fleance with you ? " Observe, too, that Lady Macbeth, but for a formal greeting, stands silent and is dismissed with the others. She goes in dread ; evidently she lives in dread, for she can read her husband's thoughts—who better ?—but he broods alone and tells her none of his doings. She knows well enough that some mischief is afoot, but she knows no more. We must picture her, while the last part of this scene passes, waiting somewhere, waiting for him to come. In the second scene we see she can endure it no more. She sends a servant to the king ; Banquo is in her mind.

But when he comes he is as far from her as ever, and she as helpless to help him, she who has been the very spirit of his doings till now. She can utter only a platitude or two—tell him not to keep so much alone, to look more cheerful. When Banquo's name is spoken she shrinks from the ill implication, then forces herself to a question. Macbeth treats her like a child. He loves her, but he knows that she is but a broken woman now.

Now how little of this is written in words ; but how right it is dramatically that it should be pictured, but left unsaid.

Next consider the episode of Banquo's murder ; perfectly

done. The two murderers, with the third—to our surprise, as to theirs—sent to spy on them. A good stroke, telling us more of Macbeth than ten speeches might do. The scene painted for us in twenty words :

> The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day.
> Now spurs the lated traveller apace
> To gain the timely inn.

Then Banquo's simple " It will rain to-night " ; and with a rough " Let it come down " they set on him. Fleance escapes ; the light goes out ; they stand in the dark, whispering a few detached words, the dead man at their feet.

We come to the banquet. A scene of some splendour it should be, for Macbeth would make his court a well-liked place by such means as he could. He moves among his guests, forcedly jovial. At any moment the news that Banquo is dead may come. If it gets about, so much the better that they should all be innocently feasting. The Queen sits aloof on her chair of state. He will not trust her nerve now among people, or she will not trust it ; and she is so weary she can hardly hold up her head under the heavy crown. But she sees him go to the door, and he stays there too long talking, and his face begins to play him tricks. She knows that danger ; rouses herself to recall him, to distract attention from his looks. He responds, but much too readily, speaks of his absent comrade, and then—Banquo has not failed the feast he was bidden to. He has come quickly in and there he sits blood-boltered in Macbeth's very chair. Think of the effect. No one else sees him. Macbeth even does not see him till he goes to take his seat, and the ghost turns his bloodstained face—it is within a foot of him—and stares at him with sightless eyes. There is no scene like it. Nor is it the physical thing that strains at our nerves. It is the sight of Macbeth, racked with horror, yet not yielding an inch, not able, as it were, to yield or to fly, for the spectre is in his own brain—how can he fly it ? And his wretched wife, weak and worn as she is, mustering what she can of her old strength to save him from discovery, to save him from himself—a ghastly, heroic effort. They are alone at last, among the flickering torches, at the disordered table.

> It will have blood. They say blood will have blood.

And he harps on the word and the thought.

> The secret'st man of blood,
> I am in blood stepped in so far,

He is a murderer both in heart and mind now, and nothing but a murderer. He sees his path. She is exhausted, and she has lost all power over him. She can only say dully

> You lack the season of all natures, sleep.

But he answers—but as if, cut free from all remorse, he could now command himself—answers hardly, confidently, boldly :

> Come, we'll to sleep. My strange and self-abuse
> Is the initiate fear that wants hard use :
> We are yet but young in deed.

The play moves to its end, to the fading out of the shadow that Lady Macbeth has become. She killed herself ; it could have needed little doing. The nemesis of her clarity of vision, of her seeing things as they were—a spot of blood but as a spot of blood, no more—is that nightly, in the sleep that should be some small salvation to her, she wanders, pitifully rubbing the blood of Duncan from her hands in vain. And Macbeth, self-damned, cannot even weep for her death, shrugs at the news and turns away. How do we first see him ? Coming from victory, to be greeted by Duncan's generous gratitude. What is his end ? The end of a beast tied to a stake and baited to death.

## § 7

I will make no attempt to sum up the virtues of Shakespeare, to pass æsthetic judgment on him. That is a task that has been well done and ill done and on the whole overdone. He is a great dramatist, a great poet, so great that we can all of us find something that we want in him. And the search—if as aforesaid we will take a little trouble to learn his language and the method of his art—need not be a hard one. Open the book, make ready, and his plays leap to life from its pages.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

For more careful study and for wider knowledge of the plays, these few books will be found useful:

*The Life of Shakespeare*, by Sir Sidney Lee; comprehends all that is certainly known, and shows this to be much more than is usually supposed. It also relegates to its proper place much of the nonsense that is talked about Shakespeare.

*Shakespeare's England.* Oxford. 2 vols., edited by Sir Walter Raleigh. This pictures the times he lived in, the people he wrote for, and is a veritable dictionary of the terms he uses.

*Shakespeare's Theatre*, by Ashley W. Thorndike. An excellent description of the technical means by which he worked (Macmillan).

For a modern edition of the plays, with fairly comprehensive notes, the Arden Edition, now edited by R. H. Case, each play in a separate volume, is, on the whole, as good a one as can be found.

While, for detailed textual study, Horace Howard Furness's *Variorum* should be used. The vast array of notes which this edition contains retail every comment of consequence that has been made upon the text since Shakespeare came to be edited.

# XI

## SHAKESPEARE TO MILTON

TWO hundred years before Dr. Johnson and his Literary Club met at the Turk's Head in Gerrard Street, Soho, an even greater set of literary men met at the Mermaid Tavern in Bread Street, Cheapside. Here, one might have met Shakespeare and Kit Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, and the other great Elizabethans, roystering and gossiping. The drink was good. Ben Jonson wrote :

> A pure cup of rich Canary wine,
> Which is the Mermaid's now, but shall be mine.

And the talk was better. Beaumont is our witness :

> What things have we seen
> Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been
> So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
> As if that every one from whence they came
> Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
> And had resolved to live a fool the rest
> Of his dull life.

Well might Keats say :

> Souls of poets dead and gone,
> What Elysium have ye known,
> Happy field or mossy cavern,
> Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern ?

### § 1

### CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

Christopher Marlowe, who was born in the same year as Shakespeare, has been described by Swinburne as " the father of English tragedy, and the creator of English blank verse." He was the son of a Canterbury shoemaker, and took his degree at Corpus Christi, Cambridge, in 1584. His

first tragedy, *Tamburlane the Great*, was acted when he was twenty-four. *Tamburlane the Great* tells the story, highly embellished by the poet's fancy, of the Mongolian potentate who overran India and defeated the Turks at the end of the fourteenth century. Marlowe makes his *Tamburlane* an eager poet, seeking for a perfect and unattainable beauty. As Mr. George Saintsbury says, "There is here no central action, only a dissolving series of scenes of terror and blood, no character except the dim and gigantic one of Tamburlaine." In this play Marlowe uses, almost for the first time, the "mighty line" which is the chief creation of English literary art, and which is familiar to us in Shakespeare's plays. A supreme example of the "mighty line" is found in Faust's address to Helen of Troy:

> Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships
> And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

Mr. Arthur Symons has finely said that Marlowe's imagination "is filled with fire and flame, with smoke and hell's fumes; with the savourous scent of incense, with the bitter taste of unshed tears."

The Elizabethan world was intoxicated by Marlowe's great literary achievement in modern English, for it must be remembered that Spenser was old-fashioned even in his own time and Shakespeare had yet to be known. Nash, a contemporary dramatist, sneered at "the swelling bombast of a bragging blank verse." But the beauty of Marlowe's writing and the dignity of his imagination are demonstrated by such lines as these:

> If all the pens that ever poets held
> Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,
> And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,
> Their minds, and muses on admired themes;
> If all the heavenly quintessence they still
> From their immortal flowers of poesy,
> Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive
> The highest reaches of a human wit;
> If these had made one poem's period,
> And all combined in beauty's worthiness,
> Yet should there hover in their restless heads
> One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least,
> Which into words no virtue can digest.

Marlowe's *Tragicall History of Doctor Faustus* appeared soon after *Tamburlane*. The tragedy was founded on a mediæval German legend, a version of which had already been translated into English and evidently read by Marlowe. Marlowe's Faust is not impelled to his bargain with the devil by the desire for pleasure, like the Faust of the legend, nor by the hunger for knowledge, like Goethe's Faust. It is boundless power that his Faust desired and for which he was willing to sell his soul. "How greatly it is all planned!" Goethe exclaimed, after reading Marlowe's *Faustus*, and Swinburne declared that few masterpieces of any age equal it in "the qualities of terror and splendour." The play ends in a scene of awesome tragedy when the devils come to demand the fulfilment of the bargain, a scene, as Swinburne said, that has "no parallel in all the range of tragedy."

If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
Yet for Christ's sake whose blood hath ransomed me,
Impose some end to my incessant pain;
Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years—
A hundred thousand, and—at last—be saved!
O, no end is limited to damned souls!
Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?
Or why is this immortal that thou hast?
Ah, Pythagoras' metempsychosis! were that true,
This soul should fly from me, and I be changed
Unto some brutish beast! all beasts are happy,
For, when they die,
Their souls are soon dissolved in elements;
But mine must live, still to be plagued in hell.
Curst be the parents that engendered me!
No, Faustus: curse thyself: curse Lucifer
That hath deprived thee of the joys of Heaven.
[*The clock strikes twelve.*
O, it strikes, it strikes! Now, body, turn to air,
Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell.
[*Thunder and lightning.*
O, soul, be changed into little water-drops,
And fall into the ocean—ne'er be found.
[*Enter Devils.*
My God! my God! look not so fierce on me!
Adders and serpents, let me breathe awhile!
Ugly hell, gape not! come not, Lucifer!
I'll burn my books!—Ah Mephistophilis!
[*Exeunt Devils with* FAUSTUS.

*The Tragicall History of Doctor Faustus* was followed by

*The Jew of Malta*—Swinburne said that only Milton had ever equalled " the glory or the melody " of the soliloquy of Barabas in the opening scene of this play ; *Edward the Second*, in which Marlowe reached the summit of his powers ; and two short fragmentary plays. It is also generally believed that Marlowe was the author of a considerable part of Shakespeare's *Henry VI.*

The great dramatist was also a lyrical poet, capable of the winsome heart of " The Passionate Shepherd."

Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and vallies, dales and fields,
Woods or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses,
And a thousand fragrant posies ;
A cap of flowers and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle.

In the spring of 1593 the plague was raging in London, and Marlowe went to stay at Deptford, then a small country village. Other Londoners followed his example, and one night the poet was killed in a tavern brawl by " a bawdy serving-man," who was his rival for the favours of a worthless strumpet. A tragic ending to the life of one of England's greatest tragic poets !

After Shakespeare, Marlowe was the chief ornament of the matchless group of poets who met at the " Mermaid," and after his death a younger poet declared that his plays

moved such delight
That men would shun their sleep in still dark night
To meditate upon his golden lines.

## § 2

### BEN JONSON

Ben Jonson was eight years younger than Shakespeare and Marlowe. His father was a Protestant preacher, and he was educated at Westminster School. Jonson served some time

as a soldier, but while he was still in the early twenties he had become mixed up in what was then the rather raffish society of London actors and playwrights, attaining notoriety by killing an actor in a duel.

His first play, *Every Man in his Humour*, was produced in 1598, Shakespeare being in the cast. The characters of the play are London citizens—all well-known theatrical types—one of them, Master Stephen, being an evident predecessor of Bob Acres. *Every Man in his Humour* was followed by *Every Man out of his Humour*, which was a failure. The dramatist, acting after the manner of his kind, quarrelled with the company and wrote satires on the various players, and on dramatists more successful than himself.

Jonson lived until 1637. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, and an admirer caused to be engraved on the slab over his grave "O Rare Ben Jonson." Of his numerous plays *The Silent Woman*, *The Alchemist*, *Bartholomew Fair* and *A Tale of a Tub* are perhaps the best known. He satirised the men and manners of his time as Aristophanes had satirised the people of Athens. He also wrote a treatise on Aristotle, and a volume of essays and maxims of no great value or interest. When James I succeeded Elizabeth, Jonson was employed to make masques for the Court ladies to act, Inigo Jones supplying the scenery and decorations; and quite naturally the dramatist quarrelled with the decorator. He held his place as Master of the Masques until 1632, and then three of his plays proving failures one after another, he declared in an ode that he

> left the loathed stage,
> And the still more loathsome age.

Jonson is mainly remembered for his beautiful lyrics, that have an attraction that his plays nearly always lack, at least when they are read and not seen. One of the most delightful is the Hymn to Diana:

> Queen and Huntress, chaste and fair,
> Now the sun is laid to sleep,
> Seated in thy silver chair
> State in wonted manner keep:
> Hesperus entreats thy light,
> Goddess excellently bright



*Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.* *From a mezzotint by Zoffany.*

DAVID GARRICK AS ABEL DRUGGER IN BEN JONSON'S *THE ALCHEMIST*

Earth, let not thy envious shade
Dare itself to interpose;
Cynthia's shining orb was made
Heaven to clear when day did close:
Bless us then with wished sight,
Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart
And thy crystal-shining quiver;
Give unto the flying hart
Space to breathe, how short soever;
Thou that mak'st a day of night,
Goddess excellently bright!

Another is the song from "Underwoods":

Oh, do not wanton with those eyes,
Lest I be sick with seeing;
Nor cast them down, but let them rise
Lest shame destroy their being.

Oh, be not angry with those fires,
For then their threats will kill me;
Nor look too kind on my desires,
For then my hopes will spill me.

Oh, do not steep them in thy tears,
For so will sorrow slay me;
Nor spread them as distraught with fears;
Mine own enough betray me.

The "Epitaph on the Countess of Pembroke" is both ingenious and charming:

Underneath this sable hearse
Lies the subject of all verse,—
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother.
Death, ere thou hast slain another,
Learn'd and fair and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee.

And Jonson lives for us all with the immortal song "To Celia":

Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup
And I'll not look for wine.
The thirst that from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine;
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honouring thee
As giving it a hope that there
It could not wither'd be;
But thou thereon didst only breathe
And sent'st it back to me;
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,
Not of itself but thee.

Of the other Elizabethan dramatists we can do no more than mention the names of Beaumont and Fletcher, authors of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and many beautiful lyrics; John Webster, the author of the blood-curdling *Duchess of Malfi*; Heywood, whom Lamb called the prose Shakespeare; Massinger, the author of *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*; Chapman, the first English translator of Homer; and Dekker, whom we remember for the beautiful lines:

the best of men
That e'er wore earth about him was a sufferer,
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit;
The first true gentleman that ever breathed.

## § 3

### FRANCIS BACON

Francis Bacon was statesman, lawyer, wit, philosopher, and man of letters; and in each of these several capacities he won a pre-eminent place. Bacon was the last scholar who could say in his own chosen words, and with but slight exaggeration, that he had taken all knowledge for his province. He lived in the early dawn of the age of specialisation while it was still just possible for an able and industrious man to make himself master of the whole body of knowledge in existence. Many others had rivalled him in the mere acquisition of learning; but none since Aristotle had so succeeded in impressing the whole with his own mental stamp, and in inspiring a new campaign against ignorance and disorder.

Bacon had the good fortune to live in one of the great ages in the world's history, in the "spacious days" of Queen Elizabeth. He was born in 1560, two years after the accession of that great sovereign; and he died in 1626.

As a boy he entered into the rich and glorious intellectual heritage of the Renaissance. In middle life he would see the publication of the masterpieces of Spenser, Montaigne, Cervantes, and Shakespeare. Before he died the supreme age of French literature was dawning. There was a new stir in the scientific world, the mediæval belief in mystery and magic was giving place to experienced and rational induction. Copernicus had died in 1543; but his work was being carried on by Kepler and Galileo. Not since the days of Socrates had men been so keenly interested in the things of the mind; and this interest Bacon shared to the full.

His own career displays all the grave defects as well as the excellencies of the sixteenth century. In the pursuit of knowledge he was indefatigable; but he was equally indefatigable in the pursuit of ambition. He cheerfully laid down his life in the interest of science; but he had been just as willing to sacrifice the life of his friend and benefactor when it stood in the way of his own worldly achievement. Indeed, Bacon is a curious and most unpleasing mixture of greatness and littleness, of magnanimity and baseness. His published writings were those of a sage; his private letters are only too frequently those of a mean time-server.

Pope's well-known line, "The greatest, wisest, meanest of mankind," is only a poet's licence, but it is based upon undoubted facts. At the same time, the graver charge of corruption has been overstated. That Bacon had accepted gifts from suitors, a common practice at that time, for which he stood his trial, he did not deny; but in his appeal to the King and to his peers he did, most proudly and emphatically, deny all guilt, and spurned the notion that the fountain of pure justice had been defiled by any act of his.

The case of Essex demands a few words of consideration. The headstrong folly of Essex had brought him within the limits of the law of treason, and his numerous enemies determined to accomplish his destruction. There was good evidence of his guilt; but the mismanagement of the case by the great lawyer Coke put the cause of the prosecution in peril. Bacon owed everything to the disinterested friendship of Essex; but in order to win the

favour of the Queen he put his services at her disposal for the purpose of destroying Essex. This turned the scale; the unfortunate Earl was condemned, and duly put to death. Many attempts have been made to extenuate this act, but without avail. It is a blot upon Bacon's fame which no apology can wipe out. In the just and eloquent words of Dean Church—"No one can doubt that the question was between his own prospect and his friend; and that to his own interest he sacrificed his friend and his own honour."

§ 4

It is not easy to explain Bacon's position satisfactorily; and many leading scientists and philosophers have denied to him much merit. He was unquestionably a great writer and a great orator; but was he anything besides? The claim sometimes made for him that he was the father of modern science cannot be maintained; indeed, his work in this field is poor both in method and in results when we compare it with that of his own contemporaries, Kepler, Galileo, and Harvey. Nor can we say that he was the inventor of induction, though he undoubtedly did much to make it popular. It must also be admitted that his contempt for Aristotle, for the mediæval schoolmen, and for the deductive method goes far beyond what is justifiable. A modern philosopher would probably find more of real value in the writings of Thomas Aquinas than in those of Bacon. Indeed, Harvey remarked acidly enough that Bacon wrote philosophy "like a Lord Chancellor." Still Bacon accomplished much. He insisted upon the importance of knowledge, upon its unity, and upon its practical aim. It is sufficient here to quote Macaulay's summary: "The aim of the Platonic philosophy was to raise us far above vulgar wants. The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to supply our vulgar wants."

Unfortunately Bacon was too conservative to abandon the old custom of writing all his most important works in Latin. Indeed, it is little to his credit that, in the age of Shakespeare, he should have had little faith in the future of the English language. For English readers the important works are the *Essays*, *The Advancement of Learning*, *The*

*History of Henry VII*, and *The New Atlantis*. All these exhibit in greater or less degree the qualities of his style. There is abundant fancy, which sometimes rises into true imagination, delicacy of observation, a fine command of diction, and a real eloquence. The least ornamental of his writings in style is the *Essays*, which are composed of highly condensed reflections and apophthegms. The following passage is illustrative of this :

> Crafty men condemn studies ; simple men admire them ; and wise men use them : for they teach not their own use : but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and compute ; nor to believe and take for granted ; nor to find talk and discourse ; but to weigh and consider.
>
> Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested ; that is, some books are to be read only in parts ; others to be read, but not curiously ; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others ; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sort of books ; else distilled books are like common distilled waters, flashy things. Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man. And therefore if a man write little, he had need have a great memory ; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit ; and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not.

Bacon's writings consist of theological, philosophical, and political essays, a *History of the Reign of King Henry VII*, a vast collection of letters, a collection of *Apophthegms*, humorous stories which Macaulay described as " the best collections of jests in the world," and *The New Atlantis*, a philosophical romance founded on Plato's story of a lost island in the Western Ocean. Bacon never finished *The New Atlantis*. In common with Plato, Sir Thomas More, and many modern writers, his idea was to sketch an ideal commonwealth. Solomon's house in *The New Atlantis* was a prophecy of the Royal Society. In addition to all this varied literary work, Bacon translated certain of the psalms into English verse.

The following quotations from Bacon illustrate his point of view and the charm of his literary expression. In reading them it is interesting to remember the theory that Bacon was the author of the plays ascribed to Shakespeare. There is unquestionably in many of these quotations thoughts often to be found in Shakespeare, and it will

doubtless be felt by the reader that while it is inconceivable that Bacon wrote Shakespeare, it would have been quite possible for Shakespeare to have written much of Bacon.

"This is certain, the mind that is most prone to be puffed up with prosperity, is most weak and apt to be dejected with the least puff of adversity."

"There is nothing more certain in nature, than that it is impossible for any body to be utterly annihilated: as it was the work of the omnipotency of God to make somewhat of nothing, so it requireth the like omnipotency to turn somewhat into nothing."

"As for talkers and futile persons, they are commonly vain and credulous withal. For he that talketh what he knoweth, will also talk what he knoweth not."

"There be three means to fortify belief. The first, is experience; the second, reason; the third, authority: and that of these which is far the most potent, is authority; for belief upon reason or upon experience, will stagger."

"This is well to be weighed, that boldness is ever blind, for it seeth not dangers and inconveniences; therefore it is ill in counsel, good in execution: so that the right use of bold persons is that they never command in chief, but be seconds, and under the direction of others. For in counsel, it is good to see dangers; and in execution not to see them, except they be very great."

"He that hath wife and children, hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief."

"A cripple in the right way, may beat a racer in the wrong one. Nay, the fleeter and better the racer is, who hath once missed his way, the farther he leaveth it behind."

"It hath been an opinion, that the French are wiser than they seem, and the Spaniards seem wiser than they are."

"God Almighty first planted a garden, and indeed it is the purest of human pleasures. It is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of men; without which, palaces and buildings are but gross handy works: And a man shall ever see, that when ages grow to civility and elegancy men come

to build stately, sooner than to garden finely; as if gardening were the greater perfection."

"Little minds, though never so full of virtue, can be but a little virtuous."

"Great riches have sold more men than they have bought."

"A popular judge is a deformed thing: and plaudits are fitter for players than for magistrates."

"I know many wise men who fear to die; for the change is bitter, and flesh would refuse to prove it: besides, the expectation brings terror, and that exceeds the evil. But I do not believe that any man fears to be dead, but only the stroke of death. This is strength and the blood to virtue—to contemn things that be desired, and to neglect that which is feared."

## § 5

### HERRICK AND LOVELACE

The seventeenth century in England was the Puritan century, but it is important to remember that the more distinguished of the earlier Elizabethan poets were definitely Puritan. Men like Sidney and Spenser had no sympathy whatever with the common Paganism of the Renaissance. They were preoccupied with ethical values, and their attitude to life is very fairly described by Charles Kingsley in *Westward Ho!* The alliance between poetry and Puritanism was short-lived. It cannot be traced in Shakespeare, and as the poet abandoned Puritanism, so the Puritan, and even the man of religious mind who was not a Puritan, began to regard poetry as a device of the devil. George Herbert burnt his love poetry when he took Holy Orders, and Donne was only prevented by his friends from doing the same thing. But while a great part of England was absorbed at the same time in the problems of predestination, and no taxation without representation, the true English light-hearted love of nature and joy in living was not without its literary expression. This expression found delightful and permanent form in the poetry of Robert Herrick, the poetical son of Ben Jonson.

§ 6

Herrick was a Devonshire parson. For nearly twenty years he lived in a remote village intensely interested in the life around him—the Morris dances, the Christmas revels, the simple rural life. Herrick was a queer soul. He is said to have had a favourite pig which he taught to drink out of a tankard, and, on one occasion, he threw the manuscript of his sermon at the congregation because they were not paying attention. He was an easy-going worldly parson, hating Puritans, and staunch in his loyalty to the king. This loyalty caused him to be driven from his living during the Commonwealth, but he returned after the Restoration and died in his parish at the age of eighty-four.

Herrick's love of nature struck a new note in English literature. He was almost the first of the pastoral poets. His poems, as Andrew Lang said, are " like a large laughing meadow in early June, diapered with flowers and sweet with the songs of birds, some a mere note or two of merry music, some as prolonged and varied though never so passionate as the complaint of the nightingale." One of the most charming of his lyrics is " To Blossoms " :

Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,
  Why do ye fall so fast ?
  Your date is not so past,
But you may stay yet here awhile
  To blush and gently smile,
    And go at last.

What, were ye born to be
  An hour or half's delight,
  And so bid good-night ?
'Twas pity Nature brought ye forth
  Merely to show your worth,
    And lose you quite.

But you are lovely leaves, where we
  May read how soon things have
  Their end, though ne'er so brave :
And after they have shown their pride
  Like you, awhile, they glide
    Into the grave.

Herrick's "sweet, spontaneous, glad, and musical" muse is joyfully evident in the following:

### CHERRY RIPE

Cherry ripe, ripe, ripe, I cry,
Full and fair ones,—come and buy!
If so be you ask me where
They do grow, I answer, there,
Where my Julia's lips do smile,—
There's the land, or cherry-isle,
Whose plantations fully show,
All the year, where cherries grow.

### TO DAFFODILS

Fair daffodils, we weep to see
  You haste away so soon:
As yet the early rising sun
  Has not attained his noon.
      Stay, stay,
  Until the hasting day
      Has run
  But to the even-song;
And having prayed together we
  Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,
  We have as short a Spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay
  As you, or any thing.
      We die
  As your hours do, and dry
      Away
  Like to the Summer's rain;
Or as the pearls of morning dew
  Ne'er to be found again.

One of his most delightfully phrased love-poems is

### THE NIGHT-PIECE, TO JULIA

Her Eyes the Glow-worme lend thee,
The Shooting Starres attend thee;
  And the Elves also,
  Whose little eyes glow,
Like the sparks of fire, befriend thee.

No *Will-o'-th'-Wispe* mislight thee;
Nor Snake, or Slow-worme bite thee:
But on, on thy way
Not making a stay,
Since Ghost ther's none to affright thee.

Let not the darke thee cumber;
What though the Moon do's slumber?
The Starres of the night
Will lend thee their light,
Like Tapers cleare without number.

Then, *Julia*, let me wooe thee,
Thus, thus to come unto me:
And when I shall meet
Thy silv'ry feet,
My soule I'le poure into thee.

Herrick loved children as deeply as he loved roses, and, for all his easy-going life, he had a deep and sincere sense of religion.

§ 7

Herrick's devotion to the Royalist cause cost him his living for a few years. The same devotion cost Richard Lovelace, the brilliant, handsome cavalier poet, his entire fortune, and Puritan rancour condemned to a miserable death at the age of forty. We remember Lovelace best for his lines:

Tell me not, Sweet, I am unkind,
That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
To war and arms I fly.

True, a new mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field;
And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such
As you too shall adore;
I could not love thee, Dear, so much,
Loved I not Honour more.

In 1642 Lovelace was imprisoned at Westminster for demanding that the King should be restored to his rights,

and while there he wrote " To Althea from Prison," which contains the well-known stanza :

Stone walls do not a prison make,
  Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
  That for a hermitage.
If I have freedom in my love,
  And in my soul am free,
Angels alone that soar above
  Enjoy such liberty.

Like Herrick and Lovelace, Edmund Waller was a Royalist, tolerant and broad-minded, but always a Royalist. The deep sense of religion is indeed characteristic of the writing of most of the Royalist poets. Nothing demonstrates the deep piety of the first half of the seventeenth century more clearly than the fact that the partisans of Charles I, denounced by the Puritans as the children of wrath and the enemies of God, included such distinguished writers of religious verse as Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Crashaw, and Cowley, and such divines as Fuller and Jeremy Taylor. It is a curious fact that all the literature of piety produced during the years of struggle between King and Parliament came from the pens of Royalist Churchmen, and not from the pens of Puritan Dissenters.

## § 8

### ROBERT BURTON

One of the most remarkable books published in England in the years before the Civil War was Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Burton was another literary clergyman, and his book, which is unique in English prose, contains a definition of melancholy, a discussion of its causes, and suggested cures. Love melancholy is given a section of its own, in which Burton's quaint humour finds full play, and the book finishes in serious vein with an examination of religious melancholy and suggestions for the cure of despair. As he proceeds, melancholy comes to mean to Burton every imaginable ill, and the most modern scientific men admire the sanity and the subtlety of his diagnoses.

He illustrates his points with quotations from scores of ancient and modern authors, and it has often been suggested that a large number of the quotations were invented by Burton himself. Dr. Johnson and Laurence Sterne were fervent admirers of the *Anatomy*, and it was one of Charles Lamb's enthusiasms. To him Robert Burton was a "fantastic great old man," and in a letter written in 1821 Lamb says: "I am hanging over for the thousandth time some passage in old Burton."

Burton's humour and wisdom may be appreciated from the following passages. Many of them have become the counters of everyday modern speech:

Naught so sweet as melancholy.

A dwarf standing on the shoulders of a giant may see further than a giant himself.

Him that makes shoes go barefoot himself.

Rob Peter, and pay Paul.

Penny wise, pound foolish.

Women wear the breeches.

Can build castles in the air.

All our geese are swans.

Set a beggar on horseback and he will ride a gallop.

Many things happen between the cup and the lip.

Birds of a feather will gather together.

No cord nor cable can so forcibly draw, or hold so fast, as love can do with a twined thread.

Marriage and hanging go by destiny; matches are made in heaven.

To make necessity a virtue.

Where God hath a temple, the Devil will have a chapel.

## § 9

### SIR THOMAS BROWNE

Sir Thomas Browne, the author of the famous *Religio Medici*, was the son of a mercer, and was born in Cheapside in 1605. He was educated at Winchester and Oxford, studied

medicine for some years on the Continent, and practised at Norwich, where he lived for over forty years. The *Religio Medici* was translated into French, Dutch, German, and Italian during its author's lifetime. Thomas Browne also wrote *Christian Morals*, *Letter to a Friend*, and *Urn Burial*. Browne was a deliberate stylist, that is to say, like Henry James, he cared more for manner than for matter. He loved to embroider, and he embroidered with extraordinary skill. He was more an elaborate literary artist than either a scientist or a philosopher.

The *Religio Medici* begins with a profession of Christian faith—"I dare without usurpation assume the honorable style of a Christian." It is a philosophic disquisition on the mysteries of life and death, and the following extract indicates Sir Thomas Browne's line of thought:

> Now for my life, it is a miracle of thirty years, which to relate were not a history, but a piece of poetry, and would sound to common ears like a fable. For the world, I count it not an inn but an hospital, and a place not to live but to die in. The world that I regard is my self; it is the microcosm of my own frame that I can cast mine eye on; for the other, I use it but like my globe, and turn it round sometimes for my recreation. Men that look upon my outside, perusing only my condition and my fortunes, do err in my altitude; for I am above Atlas his shoulders.
>
> The earth is a point not only in respect of the heavens above us, but of that heavenly and celestial part within us. That mass of flesh that circumscribes me, limits not my mind. That surface that tells the heavens it hath an end, cannot persuade me I have any. . . . Whilst I study to find how I am a microcosm, or little world, I find myself something more than the great. There is surely a piece of divinity in us—something that was before the heavens, and owes no homage unto the sun. Nature tells me I am the image of God, as well as Scripture. He that understands not thus much, hath not his introduction or first lesson, and hath yet to begin the alphabet of man.

Thomas Browne was a difficult writer. Mr. Edmund Gosse has said of him: "Browne was greatly interested in the beauty of words, in their sound, their form, the image that they raised. But his treatment of them was very curious, and is not easily or completely to be justified. There was something abnormal in Browne's intellect, and it is shown in the rather mad way in which he tossed words about."

He apologised for writing in English rather than in Latin,

and his idea of elegant English was a language full of latinised words only to be understood by readers who are masters of the Latin language. This affectation and his general attitude to life enraged Hazlitt, who wrote of him : " His is the sublime of indifference ; a passion for the abstruse and the imaginary. He turns the world round for his amusement, as if it was a globe of pasteboard. He looks down on sublunary affairs as if he had taken his station in one of the planets." Charles Lamb, however, said that Thomas Browne was one of the worthies " whom he should feel the greatest pleasure to encounter on the floor of his apartment in their nightgown and slippers, and to exchange friendly greeting with them."

Carlyle said : " The conclusion of the essay on *Urn Burial* is absolutely beautiful : a still elegiac mood, so soft, so deep, so solemn and tender, like the song of some departed saint flitting faint under the everlasting canopy of night—an echo of deepest meaning from the great and mighty nations of the dead." And Mr. George Saintsbury says of the same essay :

> A chapter on funeral ceremonials, beliefs in immortality or annihilation and the like follows, and leads up to the ever-memorable finale, beginning, " Now since these dead bones," which has rung in the ears of some eight generations as the very and unsurpassable Dead March of English Prose. Every word of this chapter is memorable, and almost every word abides in the memory by dint of Browne's marmoreal phrase, his great and grave meaning, and the wonderful clangour and echo of his word-music. " Time, which antiquates antiquities," will have some difficulty in destroying this. And through all the chapter his style, like his theme, rises, till after a wonderful burst of mysticism, we are left with such a dying close as never had been heard in English before, " ready to be anything in the ecstasy of being ever, and as content with six foot as with the moles of Adrianus."

The first edition of *Religio Medici* was published in 1642.

Several of the writers dealt with in this section lived through the Commonwealth and after the Restoration, but they may all be regarded as belonging in essentials to the first half of their century. Charles I was beheaded in 1649. Cromwell was proclaimed Lord Protector in 1653, and the literary glory of the Cromwellian period and of the entire seventeenth century was John Milton, the Protector's Latin secretary.

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# XII

# JOHN MILTON

BY JOHN DRINKWATER

JOHN MILTON, by common consent of critical opinion, holds a place among the first three great English poets. This is not to say that there are not a dozen, or even twenty, writers in the succession of English poetry who at times in individual quality touch a height equal to Milton's own. The word "great" is one that is commonly used about poets, often too easily, and generally, I suppose, with a difference. What is meant at the moment is that Milton stands pre-eminently for a very important kind of achievement in poetry, and, so far as can be seen in perspective up to our own day, there are hardly more than two other poets of whom the same thing can so definitely be said. There were many poets among the Elizabethans who in their best moments had as clearly the stuff of poetry in them as Shakespeare himself, but in breadth and consistency of performance Shakespeare transcends them all. It may be said that there is nothing which they did that he did not do as well and generally better. He was the chief and crowning glory of a vast range of poetic activity, practised by many men of great endowments, and, profiting as he did by their efforts and example, he brought the whole movement to its most perfect expression. So that, both by his personal quality and the actual volume of his work, it is of Shakespeare that we think instinctively as *the* great poet of his time. Because his time happened to be one of peculiar virtue as an inspiration to poetry, a time when the nation, both in adventure and culture, was first becoming delightedly aware of its own splendour and vitality, and was content to enjoy the spectacle of life, and share in its ardours purely for their own invigorating sake, without

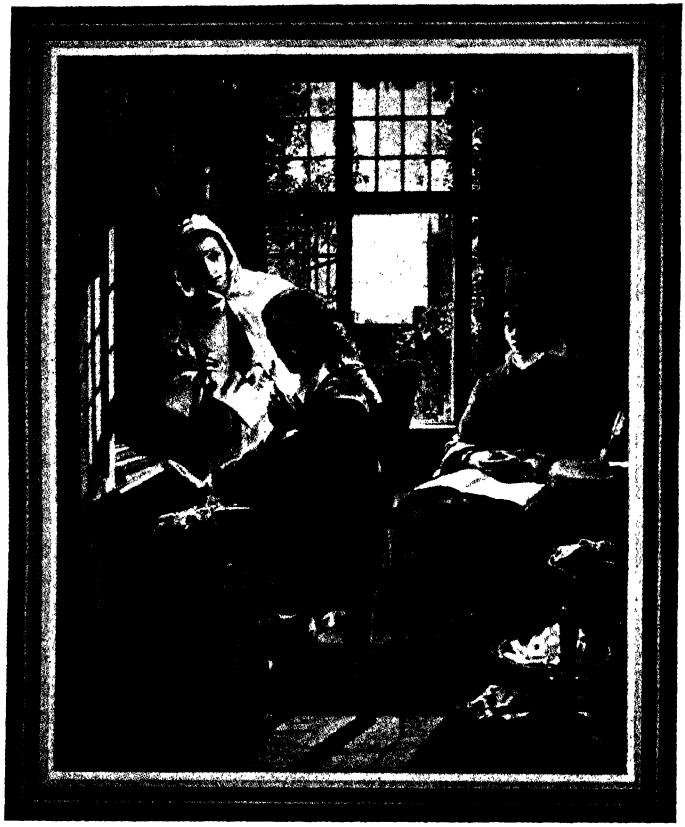


*Photo : Rischgitz Collection.*

MILTON DICTATING "SAMSON AGONISTES."
From a painting by J. C. Horsley, R.A.

reducing them to moral or social problems, he comes to our minds always, perhaps, as the greatest poet of all. After him there are two other poets in the English story of whom something of the same kind may be said, John Milton and William Wordsworth. Circumstances of history made it impossible for either of these to inform their work with

quite the same happy ease of spiritual youth that marks even the tragedies of Shakespeare, but each in his own way pre-eminently stood for one of the great natural movements in English poetry. After Wordsworth there is no poet of whom we can yet be quite sure in this matter. There are many whose work is certain of individual fame for ever, but none of whom we can yet say that he, above all others, most clearly embodied that strange urge in one direction which underlies all the manifold workings of an epoch.

John Milton's claim to greatness by this standard rests, to put it very briefly, on his unwearying desire, implicit through all his work and once plainly confessed, " to justify the ways of God to men." The whole Puritan revolutionary movement in England was something more than a protest against the evil-doing of Charles the First. That was the occasion of its immediate expression in arms, but behind it all there was something far more constructive than this indignation, splendid though that was. The Elizabethan age—the accepted definition is as good as another—had been one of immense unquestioning activity. Physical adventure, the crossing of great seas in small boats, a childlike gaiety of response to the colour and arrogance of Renaissance culture that poured into the mind of the country from Italy, it was all a very festival of ardent and powerful youth. That, we know, is not the complete story, or, rather, a story with no need of qualification. Squalor and pedantry and mincing logic were not unknown, but these were accidental to, and not characteristic of, the time, which remained essentially one of eager and unquestioning joy in life, a finely irresponsible joy it may almost be said. When this impulse had spent itself, and the magnificence of youth had passed, there followed a time when the conscience of the nation became a deliberate thing, setting itself to assess the ardours of a day now gone. It was this spirit of argued judgment as distinguished from simple and delighted acceptance, that was at the very roots of the whole Puritan revolution in England. It was not necessarily an angry judgment nor a self-righteous one, nor even a grudging one, but it was judgment, and its high priest was John Milton.

§ 1

The outline of Milton's life may be told in a few words. The son of a middle-class family, he was born in London in 1608, was educated at St. Paul's School and Christ's College, Cambridge, where he graduated in 1629, wrote most of his shorter poems, including *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, *Comus* and *Lycidas*, before he was thirty, went on the Continental Tour, and at the age of thirty-two, having become the tutor of his nephews, he seemed to have forsaken poetry for political and social pamphleteering. He signalised his marriage to Mary Powell in 1643 by a pamphlet on *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*—not, it may be said, without very considerable provocation—which was followed by *Areopagitica* in 1644. In 1649, after the execution of the King, he was made Latin Secretary to the Council of State, and continued his controversial writing with *Eikonoklastes*, a reply to the King's book, and other essays which contain some of the finest and most vehement, if not best-tempered, prose in the language. His blindness began in 1651, and among his secretarial assistants was the poet Andrew Marvell. Losing his official position at the Restoration, he was for a time in hiding. He married for a second time in 1656, and again a third in 1662. His remaining years were spent partly at Chalfont St. Giles and partly in London ; he died at the age of sixty-six in 1674, and was buried in St. Giles's, Cripplegate.

In 1645 he had collected his smaller poems for publication, and a second edition of the volume was issued with additions in 1673. His great works were published, *Paradise Lost* in 1667, and *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* in 1671. He is supposed to have begun writing the first of these as early as 1650, and the story of his dictating his masterpieces to his daughters is well known. His long silence as a poet in the middle of his life is difficult to explain, preoccupied though he may have been with political matters. We may, however, be sure that during the years when he was not actively writing poetry he was meditating the great work in front of him and preparing himself for a task as to the responsibility of which he was very deliberately conscious. His muse was to address itself to " Things un-

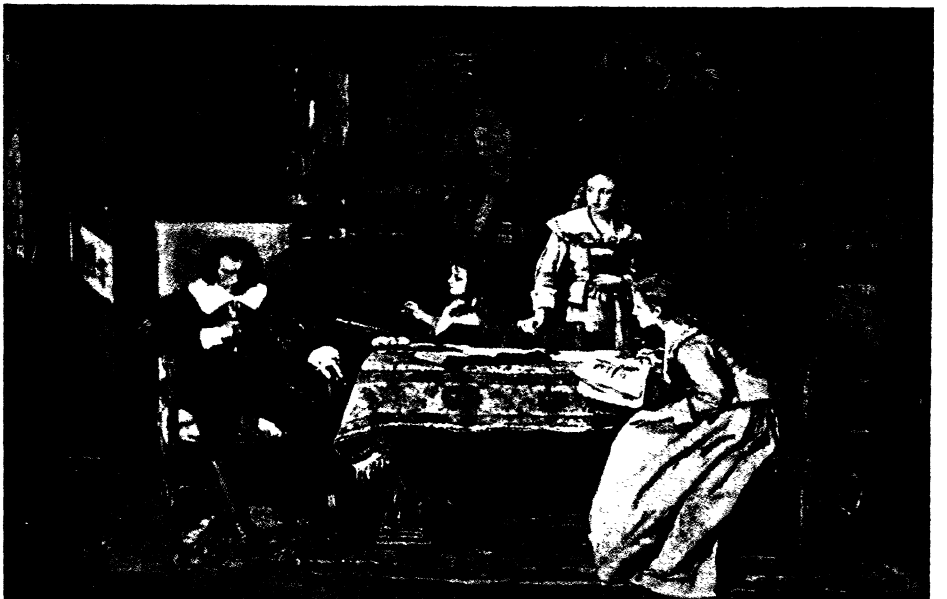


*Photo: Rischgitz Collection.*

JOHN MILTON COMPOSING *PARADISE LOST*.

**After Munkacsy.**

The poet had become blind, and dictated to his daughter.

attempted yet in prose or rhyme." And, as he tells us in his *Apology for Smectymnuus* (1641), he believed that "He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem."

He came to the composition of the great works of his later years a good scholar, the chief intellectual champion in his country of political and religious freedom, and a man deeply versed in the sorrows and disillusions of life. In taking for his themes the fall of Satan, the redemption of the world by the Son of Man, and the sufferings of Samson, he was following the example of the Greeks in choosing stories which should be familiar to his readers. The mere invention of a fable as an exercise for his genius appealed to him no more than it did to Shakespeare, and he preferred to lavish the vast stores of his energy upon the spiritual and imaginative significance with which the mould of accepted fables could be filled. The literature which has grown up round these poems in itself forms a library of theology, poetics, and philosophy.

§ 2

To attempt anything like an analysis of the vast subject-matter of Milton's writings is here obviously impossible. Of the poetry itself it may at once be said that it cannot be approached profitably in any light or easy mood. Once to have come under the spell of the serene mastery of Milton's genius is to be made free of it for ever. It is impossible once to like Milton's poetry and then to grow tired of it, but it may well sometimes be that a reader who is happy enough with some tripping or homely muse should find the ceremony of the great Puritan a little difficult, though *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, together with passages from *Comus* and *Lycidas*, can hardly fail to be pleasing to anybody. But for the rest of us there comes a time when the full glory of Milton's last period is a thing in life as inevitable in its authority as the beauty of nature itself. Matthew Arnold's "Others abide our question, thou art free" is as true of the other supreme poets as it is of Shakespeare. If we have the love of English poetry in our blood at all, we can no longer argue about :

Of Man's first disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us and regain the blissful seat,
Sing heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,
In the beginning how the heav'ns and earth
Rose out of Chaos; or if Sion hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flow'd
Fast by the oracle of God; I thence
Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.
And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss,
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

This spiritual exaltation Milton in his later works maintained, with hardly a break, for something like fifteen thousand lines. In doing it he achieved a style which in its union of opulence and severity was at the time, and has remained, without parallel. As always with the great men, the poetry transcends the argument. The argument was indeed a passionate enough conviction with Milton himself, and was the foundation from which the mighty edifice of his poetry rose. But it is the poetry itself that, in the right mood, is a defence against the ignominies of the world as hardly any other English poetry is. Milton did very ardently wish to "justify the ways of God to men," to scourge tyranny, and to exalt the undying heroism of man. But in these things he was but one of many thousand generous spirits who have passed on earth, and his testament was made in terms of a mythology and a political temper which in themselves are not very intimately stirring things to us to-day. But, unlike those other thousands, Milton was a great poet, and, as such, he both transcended for ever

the conditions of the moment and lifted his personal passion into universal poise by the sublime certainty with which it was embodied. Poise—that is the last word when all critical analysis of Milton has been made. To read *Paradise Lost* or *Samson Agonistes*, without haste and without question, is to look upon the troubled world with untroubled eyes. The purging is not of the same kind as that affected by the great poets of the tragic human emotions, where the salvation is wrought by the spectator being moved to a God-like compassion for suffering or erring man. Reading one of the great Shakespeare tragedies we are so touched to pity that we not only feel that in the course of justice there ought to be some final compensation for the disaster which we have witnessed, but that in some strange way we have been given the power to will that it shall be so. Milton, even in *Samson Agonistes*, where the actual fable is one of human catastrophe, does not move us in quite the same way. Here we feel not so much as we do in Shakespeare's tragedies that when all has been endured mercy will come, as it were, from some common impulse of the world to heal even the most merited suffering, but that the spirit of man can mysteriously rise clear of its own limitations and that man is, in fact, greater than the expression that he can ever give to himself in the conduct of life. Shakespeare's way is the more human, the more passionate, and the more intimately related to our common moods, but there are times when Milton can bring us a reassurance that is altogether his own.

The keen spiritual light that is over all Milton's meditation does not lessen the warmth of his humanity, a quality we are apt to forget was his when we think of him. His early poems, though they are marked already by the ceremony that in the great works was to come to such grandeur of style, are the work of a young poet moving freely about the world, generous and even gay in temper. Whatever his austerity of manner, there was no coldness at the heart of the man who could write :

> While the ploughman near at hand
> Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,
> And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
> And the mower whets his scythe,
> And every shepherd tells his tale
> Under the hawthorn in the dale. . . .

Nor, when *Paradise Lost* appeared more than twenty years later, had the note gone :

> So hand in hand they pass'd, the loveliest pair
> That ever since in love's embraces met;
> Adam the goodliest man of men since born
> His sons, the fairest of her daughters Eve.
> Under a tuft of shade, that on a green
> Stood whisp'ring soft, by a fresh fountain side
> They sat them down; and after no more toil
> Of their sweet gard'ning labour than sufficed
> To recommend cool Zephyr, and made ease
> More easy, wholesome thirst and appetite
> More grateful, to their supper fruits they fell. . . .

a passage the tenderness of which is recurrent throughout the poem whenever Milton's thought for a moment leaves the height of its great argument and dwells on the human joys and sorrows of Paradise. While, however, he is thus always able to remind us of his command of the gentler things of holiday and pathos, it remains the truth that it is in a sublime philosophic conception of life, rather than in the particular and intimate lives of men and women, that his interest chiefly lies and in the expression of which his mastery is most commonly used.

> How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
> Stol'n on his wing my three and twentieth year!
> My hasting days fly on with full career,
> But my late spring no bud or blossom show'th.
> Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,
> That I to manhood am arrived so near,
> And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
> That some more timely-happy spirits indu'th.
> Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
> It shall be still in strictest measure even
> To that same lot, however mean or high,
> Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven.
> All is, if I have grace to use it so,
> As ever in my great Task-master's eye.

There at twenty-three was already the promise of the poet who in the full maturity of his power was to learn how, by pure majesty of spirit and the very magic of verse, to bring even angels into the range of our human sympathies, as in :

So spake the seraph Abdiel, faithful found,
Among the faithless, faithful only he:
Among innumerable false, unmoved,
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
Nor number, nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind
Though single. . . .

and who, when he brought these faculties to a life still generalised, but nearer to our own experience, as at the end of *Samson Agonistes*, could achieve a moving beauty which has never been excelled in English poetry:

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise, or blame, nothing but well and fair,
And what may quiet us in a death so noble. . . .

Any page of Milton will furnish examples of his mastery. Our choice might follow Swinburne, who finds an incomparable excellence of diction in the opening of *Lycidas*:

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude,
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year. . . .

or Keats, who says:

"There are two specimens of very extraordinary beauty in the *Paradise Lost*: they are of a nature, so far as I have read, unexampled elsewhere; they are entirely distinct from the brief pathos of Dante, and they are not to be found even in Shakespeare. The one is in line 268, iv:

Not that fair field
Of Enna, where Proserpine, gathering flowers,
Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis
Was gathered, which cost Ceres all that pain
To seek her through the world.

The other is line 32, book viii:

But drive far off the barbarous dissonance
Of Bacchus and his revellers, the race
Of that wild rout that tore the Thracian bard
In Rhodope, where woods and rocks had ears
To rapture, till the savage clamour drowned
Both harp and voice; nor could the Muse defend
Her son.

These appear exclusively Miltonic, without the shadow of another mind, ancient or modern."

De Quincey, who held Milton to be the greatest poet of all time—who somewhere speaks of "the solemn planetary wheelings of the verse of Milton"—selected as "his most tremendous passage—perhaps the most sublime, all things considered, that exists in human literature," the lines (273, bk. x), where Death first becomes aware of his own future empire over man:

> So saying, with delight he snuffed the smell
> Of mortal change on earth. As when a flock
> Of ravenous fowl, through many a league remote,
> Against the day of battle, to a field,
> Where armies lie encamped, come flying, lured.
> So scented the grim feature, and upturned
> His nostril wide into the murky air,
> Sagacious of his quarry from so far.

## § 3

Although, more perhaps than most poets, Milton allowed a life of affairs to encroach upon his actual poetical composition, there is no poet of whom it can be more justly said that he devoted his life to poetry. Having proved his gifts in the early poems, he determined to wait until such time as he felt himself to be equipped for a work that should not only be profound in conception but massive in volume and architecture. "Neither do I think it shame," he writes in the *Reason of Church Government urged against Prelatry* of 1641, "to covenant with any knowing reader that, for some years yet I may go on trust with him toward the payment of what I am now indebted, as being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth or the vapours of wine . . . but by devout prayer to that eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge . . . to this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous art and affairs. . . ." Through those years of political and religious controversy his mind was fixed constantly upon the redemption of this promise. The result of all this was that when the works came they were upon a scale that can be no more lightly apprehended by the reader than they were

lightly conceived by the poet. Before we can come to anything like the full significance of Milton's great poems we must read them steadily and we must read them whole.

We may for purposes of argument do very well in dividing poets up into schools, Classical, Romantic, Realist, and so forth, but when we come to the very great men we find that in some measure or another they have the best qualities of all these different kinds. Nowhere has the case for the so-called Classic as against the Romantic method been put more lucidly, than in Matthew Arnold's famous *Preface* of 1853.

"We can hardly at the present day understand what Menander meant, when he told a man who inquired as to the progress of his comedy that he had finished it, not having yet written a single line, because he had constructed the action of it in his mind. A modern critic would have assured him that the merit of his piece depended on the brilliant things which arose under his pen as he went along. We have poems which seem to exist merely for the sake of single lines and passages; not for the sake of producing any total-impression. We have critics who seem to direct their attention merely to detached expressions, to the language about the action, not to the action itself. I verily think that the majority of them do not in their hearts believe that there is such a thing as a total-impression to be derived from a poem at all, or to be demanded from a poet; they think the term a commonplace of metaphysical criticism. They will permit the Poet to select any action he pleases, and to suffer that action to go as it will, provided he gratifies them with occasional bursts of fine writing, and with a shower of isolated thoughts and images. That is, they permit him to leave their poetical sense ungratified, provided that he gratifies their rhetorical sense and their curiosity."

This is an admirable piece of æsthetic theory, and it was a point that very much needed to be made, and for that matter still needs to be made to-day in view of the common practice of modern poetry. But the argument is one which when we come to the poets themselves in their poetry—even to Matthew Arnold in his own poetry—we find to need qualification. It is true that certain poets, chiefly lyric poets, do make good their claim to our remembrance almost entirely because of the occasional verbal felicities

of which Arnold speaks, and they do not achieve, or. perhaps, even aim at, that " total-impression " which the critic so rightly holds up to admiration. But this does not mean that the poets who are masters of proportion and form on the grand scale are indifferent to the appeal of those same verbal felicities. How, for example, would Arnold account for Keats in his reckoning ? The form of the *Odes*, although it is of small dimensions, has decided grandeur, and the " total-impression " is emphatic and lasting. And yet Keats took the greatest pains to " load every rift with ore." There is hardly a line without some exquisite touch of the kind that Arnold, in his enthusiasm for classic purity, seems almost to censure. As I have pointed out, no poetry could be more suggestive in this matter than Arnold's own, where the general effect is always kept in view with scrupulous loyalty to the poet's belief, but where " showers of isolated thoughts and images " are constantly breaking upon the design to our great profit.

In Milton this richness of phrase, beautiful even apart from its context, is constant. " The tann'd haycock in the mead," " the glowing violet," " brisk as the April buds in Primrose season," " beauty is Nature's brag," " they also serve who only stand and wait," " the marble air," " And from sweet kernels prest She tempers dulcet creams," " and calm of mind all passion spent "—such things come to the eye on almost any page. Great and essential as the complete design is, it is not difficult ever to make Milton's inspiration clear by short passages, even phrases. But the design remains, to be discovered only by the patient and humble reader. Once to behold it, in all its lordly power and grace, is to rejoice in one of the sublime achievements of English character and of English poetry.

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# XIII

# MARVELL AND WALTON

## § 1

ANDREW MARVELL, the friend of Milton, is generally called a Puritan poet, although his sympathies were largely with Charles I, and he wrote satires on the Long Parliament. Some of his noblest lines were written on Cromwell's death :

> I saw him dead : a leaden slumber lies,
> And mortal sleep over those wakeful eyes :
> Those gentle rays under the lids were fled,
> Which through his looks that piercing sweetness shed ;
> That port, which so majestic was as strong,
> Loose, and deprived of vigour, stretched along ;
> All withered, all discoloured, pale and wan,
> How much another thing, no more that man !
> O, human glory vain ! O, Death ! O, wings !
> O, worthless world ! O, transitory things !
> Yet dwelt that greatness in his shape decayed,
> That still though dead, greater than Death he laid,
> And in his altered face you something feign
> That threatens Death, he yet will live again.

Marvell was an open-air man, joying in gardens and woods, rivers and birds. No English poet, indeed, has loved Nature more than he. Descriptions of the countryside, with observations of its various characteristic features, and appreciations of its peculiar charm and beauty, figure largely throughout English literature. Spenser, Shakespeare, Herrick, and our contemporaries Hardy and Masefield, are but a few of the great writers who, in the course of their works, frequently convey the true spirit, as well as accurate portraits, of country life.

§ 2

There is a group of writers who have specially devoted themselves to portraying and interpreting the sight and sounds and atmosphere of the country and its natural inhabitants.

The first in order of time is Izaak Walton, born in

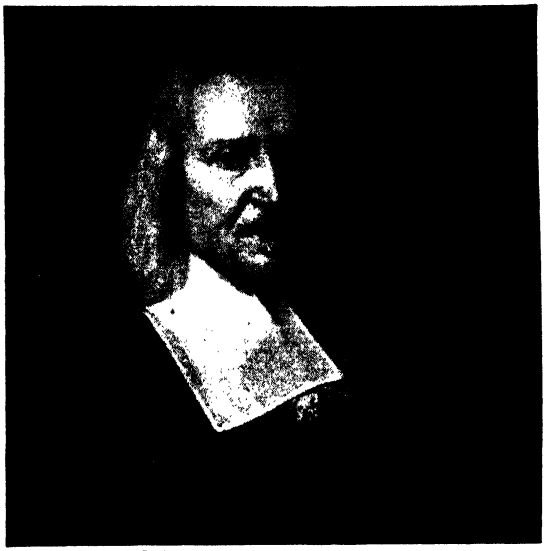


*Photo : Rischgitz Collection.*

IZAAK WALTON, BY JACOB HUYSMAN.
National Portrait Gallery, London.

1593, whose *Compleat Angler* appeared in 1653, the author being then in his sixtieth year. From his youth upwards, his associates were of the cultivated class, his first wife being a descendant of Cranmer, and his second wife half-sister to Thomas Ken, the celebrated Bishop of Bath and Wells. In 1618, we find his name on the roll of the Ironmongers Company, though what his actual business in London was, is not clear. Whatever it was, it enabled him to retire, free from financial anxiety, in 1644. After

his retirement he lived for forty years; and it was during this period that the *Compleat Angler* and the *Lives* of his friends Donne, Wotton, and other almost equally distinguished men, were written.

The *Compleat Angler* is obviously the work of a writer who had reached the age of serenity. The postscript which appears at the end of the last page, "Study to be Quiet," is the keynote to the whole. It is professedly and, to a large extent actually, a practical handbook of the angler's art; but it is very much more than that. The book's sub-title, *The Contemplative Man's Recreation*, gives a hint of Walton's attitude both to angling and to life in general; and, as he says in his preface, "the whole Discourse is, or rather was, a picture of my own disposition, especially in such days and times as I have laid aside business, and gone a-fishing with honest Nat. and R. Roe." Thus we find pleasantly and whimsically intermingled practical advice on baits, recipes for cooking fish, and reflections on life, the characteristic note of all being one of thankfulness and appreciation. "Well," he says to his companion, "having now taught you to paint your rod, and we having still a mile to Tottenham High Cross, I will, as we walk towards it in the cool shade of this sweet honeysuckle hedge, mention to you some of the thoughts and joys that have possest my soul since we two met together."

The features of the country that peculiarly appeal to Walton are its quiet and restfulness, its sweetness and peaceful beauty, its calm associations. Although he comments repeatedly on bird and fish, his attitude to them is an anthropomorphic one. He has little of the spirit of the naturalist. He contemplates, rather than studies, nature. He quotes with acquiescence the statements of previous writers on natural history, and rarely observes for himself that the facts are far other. He is so filled with admiration and love of it all that only occasionally he notices the details. His country is the country of the Londoner, but not the Londoner of to-day. He is a citizen of that London,

> small and white and clean,
> The clear Thames gliding 'twixt her gardens green,

which had the fields and woods within an easy walk; whose

shopkeepers and merchants were still familiar with country sights and sounds, if not with the actual detail of country life. The Angler knows the birds and beasts and flowers by look and song and name; he takes pleasure in the sight of wood and stream, but it is the surface of these things that attracts and strikes him. Country life is to him the milk-maid and her mother singing an old catch among the flowers; the lavendered sheets in the ale-house; the barking of the hounds as the otter turns at bay in the water-meadows "chequered with water-lilies and lady-smocks." It is like a beautifully decorated manuscript, where allegory and axiom and morality are pictured in gold and colours, and it matters little to him whether or not his natural history is true in fact, if he can draw from it an example of the love or wisdom of his Maker.

Certainly, his picture of the countryside is one which would turn a man's mind to peace and quietude. There is no hint of the other side of rain and hunger and hard work. His very beggars sit under a honeysuckle hedge propounding riddles and singing songs in turn; a wet day is only an excuse for a game of shovelboard at an honest ale-house, and a rainy evening gives an opportunity to read "the following Discourse." It is an Arcadian scene, but so charming and so delicately drawn that it almost convinces us of its reality.

No short biography in our literature stands higher than Walton's *Lives* already referred to. The following passage from the life of Sanderson illustrated the homely natural style of Walton:

> I met him accidentally in London, in sad-coloured clothes, and, God knows, far from being costly. The place of our meeting was near to Little Britain, where he had been to buy a book, which he then had in his hand. We had no inclination to part presently, and therefore turned to stand in a corner under a pent-house—for it began to rain—and immediately the wind rose, and the rain increased so much, that both became so inconvenient as to force us into a cleanly house, where we had bread, cheese, ale, and a fire for our money. This rain and wind were so obliging to me, as to force our stay there for at least an hour, to my great content and advantage; for in that time he made to me many useful observations, with much clearness and conscientious freedom.

Walton then relates some of Sanderson's talk. He

lamented the Parliament's attacks on the Liturgy and the growing use of extempore prayers in churches.

Walton's *Lives* are not only gems of biography, they are an education in human love and fine feeling. They were one of Dr. Johnson's favourite books; and Wordsworth wrote of them:

> The feather, whence the pen
> Was shaped that traced the lives of these good men,
> Dropped from an Angel's wing.

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# XIV

# JOHN BUNYAN

## § 1

IF Milton stands in literature for Puritan culture, Bunyan stands for Puritan fervour.

*The Pilgrim's Progress* is a human drama. Most allegories are fantastic, and many of them, including Spenser's "Faery Queene," are apt to be tedious. But Bunyan is always dramatic. His allegory is ingenious in its construction and seasoned by homely wit, and it has, as Macaulay said, been "read by many thousands with tears." The critic of letters has been moved by *The Pilgrim's Progress* to enthusiasm. Dr. Johnson hated to read books through, but he made an exception of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Indeed, he wished it were longer.

Bunyan, Macaulay says, was "almost the only writer who ever gave to the abstract the interest of the concrete." His mind was so imaginative that "personifications, when he dealt with them, became men." His mind was so dramatic that a dialogue between two qualities in *The Pilgrim's Progress* has a more convincing realism than "a dialogue between two human beings in most plays." And what a marvel it is that this great book should have been written by a tinker, and the son of a tinker, who himself has told us: "I never went to school, to Aristotle or Plato, but was brought up in my father's house in a very mean condition, among a company of poor countrymen."

Not only was John Bunyan a great writer born with a complete power of expression, he was, and he remains, the spokesman of the people articulate among the generally inarticulate, one of the two great English writers (Dickens was the other) who belonged to the common people, loved the common people, and possessed a perfect knowledge of what the common people dream and hope and fear.

John Bunyan was born at Elstow, a village near Bedford, in 1628; the son of "an honest poor labouring man, who, like Adam unparadised, had all the world to get his bread in, and was very careful to maintain his family." He was sent to the Grammar School at Bedford, where he was taught "to read and write, according to the rate of other poor men's children." After he left school, his father taught him his own trade of a tinker, and he went on living in Elstow. Bunyan was a passionate and imaginative boy, the ringleader in most of the village mischief. After his conversion, he was fond of referring in lurid terms to the wickedness of his youth, but there is little doubt that this wickedness was grotesquely exaggerated. In our days at every Salvation Army meeting, one can hear from the simple converted obviously over-coloured accounts of sins committed in unregenerate days. This is indeed quite natural, nothing more than perfectly harmless vanity, as well as the desire to emphasise the "saving power of grace." Bunyan tells us that he swore and lied and poached and robbed orchards. But he was never drunk, and he more than once declares that he was never unchaste. However great a sinner Bunyan may have been, he suffered grievously for his sins. The English people in the seventeenth century had learned to read the Bible, which they accepted literally, and Bunyan, as a boy, was convinced that the sins he committed would bring him awful and eternal punishment. Like Joan of Arc he had visions, and all his visions were prophecies of torment.

At the beginning of the Civil War Bunyan served as a soldier. His soldiering lasted only a year, and then he went back to Elstow and married. He says:

I lighted on a wife whose father was counted godly. We came together as poor as poor might be, not having so much household stuff as a dish or a spoon between us. But she had for her portion two books, *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and *The Practice of Piety*, which her father had left her when he died. In these two books I sometimes read with her. I found some things pleasing to me, but all this while I met with no conviction. She often told me what a godly man her father was, how he would reprove and correct vice both in his house and among his neighbours, what a strict and holy life he lived in his day, both in word and deed. These books, though they did not reach my heart, did light in me some desire to religion.

At this time of his life Bunyan was a regular attendant at the parish church, though " retaining my wicked life." He read the Bible, grieved for his sins, and was miserably unhappy, finding nowhere any hope or any satisfaction. Then light came to him miraculously as it came to St. Paul. He writes :

> One day as I was travelling into the country, musing on the wickedness of my heart, and considering the enmity that was in me to God, the Scripture came into my mind, " He hath made peace through the blood of His cross." I saw that the justice of God and my sinful soul could embrace and kiss each other. I was ready to swoon, not with grief and trouble, but with solid joy and peace.

Bunyan joined the Baptist Congregation in Bedford, and was baptized in the River Ouse. Soon after his conversion, Bunyan began to preach, and in a very short time he gained a great reputation among the sects which in the middle of the seventeenth century were, as Froude says, " springing up all over England as weeds in a hotbed."

The Act of Uniformity, passed after the Restoration, made the meetings of the Protestant sects illegal, and also made non-attendance at the parish church a crime. The meeting-houses were shut up, and the Dissenters met together for worship in woods and outhouses, always fearing arrest. Bunyan himself was arrested on November 12, 1660.

The Bedford magistrates were most unwilling to send Bunyan to prison. They tried hard to persuade him to promise not to preach in public, but Bunyan would make no compromise, and would give no promises. And most reluctantly the magistrates committed him to Bedford gaol, where he stayed for twelve years. The imprisonment of Bunyan is a curious story. Not only the local magistrates, but even the High Court judges in London, tried in vain to get him out of prison. He could have left at any moment by giving a simple promise, but this was against his conscience. After six years he was actually released under the Declaration of Indulgence, and was promptly re-arrested for preaching. After another six years the policy of the Government changed, and one of the most famous imprisonments in history came to an end. It seems perfectly clear that the rigour of his punishment has been grossly exaggerated. His family and his friends were allowed to

see him whenever they liked; he was permitted to preach in prison—since that was a private place—he was even able to go out of the prison practically every day. Without these years of restricted activity Bunyan would probably never have been anything more than an effective and successful preacher. Prison gave him time to read, to think, and to write. In Bedford gaol Bunyan read and re-read the Bible, read Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, George Herbert's devotional poems, and probably the *Faery Queene* and *Paradise Lost*. In Bedford gaol he wrote *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, and the first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Bunyan was released on May 8, 1672. He was then forty-four years old.

§ 2

In the years that followed his imprisonment, Bunyan wrote a *Discourse upon Anti-Christ*, *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and *The Holy War*, as well as a considerable quantity of verse. The verse, if never poetry of any value, is often ingenious, neat, and quaint.

*Grace Abounding* is an autobiography detailing the spiritual struggles which have already been described. *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* consists of a dialogue between Mr. Wiseman and Mr. Attentive, in which we are told the story of an unscrupulous and successful scoundrel who lived evilly and died unrepentant. Although Bunyan knew nothing about art, he was instinctively too fine an artist to spoil his story, interesting and valuable as a picture of English life under the later Stuarts, by a melodramatic deathbed repentance:

> When he drew near his end, there was no more alteration in him than what was made by his disease upon his body. He was the selfsame Mr. Badman still, not only in name, but in condition, and that to the very day of his death and the moment in which he died. There seemed not to be in it to the standers by so much as a strong struggle of nature. He died like a lamb, or, as men call it, like a chrisom child, quietly and without fear.

*The Holy War* is a much more involved and a much less effective allegory than *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It is a de-

scription of the struggle for the possession of the city of Mansoul between the forces of evil and the forces of good, between the devil and Christ. The actors in the drama are virtues and vices. The narrative is too long. It would have been more effective if it had concluded with the capture of Mansoul by Emmanuel and the defeat and punishment of the Diabolians. But Bunyan evidently wanted to impress his readers with the fact that until the day of his death the Christian is liable to the assaults of the devil. The trouble with *The Holy War* is that it is not easy to determine exactly what Bunyan meant. Froude says:

> Here lies the real weakness of *The Holy War*. It may be looked at either as the war in the soul of each sinner that is saved, or as the war for the deliverance of humanity. Under the first aspect it leaves out of sight the large majority of mankind who are not supposed to be saved, and out of whom, therefore, Diabolus is not driven at all. Under the other aspect the struggle is still unfinished; the last act of the drama has still to be played, and we know not what the conclusion is to be.

## § 3

*The Pilgrim's Progress* was first published in 1678, as has been said, the first and infinitely the better part having been written in Bedford gaol. After the Bible, it is the most popular book in the English language, and there is no need to recall the incidents of Christian's journey to the Delectable Land. *The Pilgrim's Progress* has been translated into every language, and it remains the most beautiful description of Christian experience. Mark Rutherford called Bunyan the poet of Puritanism. He was even more than that, for, with some small excisions, all Christendom has found *The Pilgrim's Progress* not only fine literature but an ethical and mystical stimulant. The story opens with a passage of fine dramatic simplicity: "As I walked through the wilderness of this world I lighted on a certain place where was a Den, and I laid me down in that place to sleep; and as I slept I dreamed a dream."

It is interesting to compare this passage with Dante's: "In the middle of life's journey I found myself in a darkling wood, where the traces of the straight path were lost."

One of the most dramatic incidents of the pilgrimage occurred when Christian reached the Valley of Humiliation,



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*CHRISTIAN* AND *HOPEFUL* IN THE DUNGEON.

From the etching by William Strang.

"The *Giant* therefore drove them before him, and put them into his castle, in a very dark Dungeon, nasty and stinking to the spirit of these two men."

where he was confronted by the foul fiend, Apollyon. At first the pilgrim had a mind to go back. But he reflected that "he had no armour for his back" and that it was, therefore, safer to go forward. After a long conversation the fiend swore to "spill" Christian's soul:

And with that he threw a flaming dart at his breast; but Christian had a shield in his hand, with which he caught it, and so prevented the danger of that.

Then did Christian draw, for he saw it was time to bestir him: and Apollyon as fast made at him, throwing darts as thick as hail; by which, notwithstanding all that Christian could do to avoid it, Apollyon wounded him in his head, his hand, and foot. This made Christian give a little back; Apollyon, therefore, followed his work amain, and Christian again took courage, and resisted as manfully as he could. This sore combat lasted for above half a day, even till Christian was almost quite spent; for you must know that Christian, by reason of his wounds, must needs grow weaker and weaker.

Then Apollyon, espying his opportunity, began to gather up close to Christian, and wrestling with him, gave him a dreadful fall; and with that Christian's sword flew out of his hand. Then said Apollyon, I am sure of thee now. And with that he had almost pressed him to death, so that Christian began to despair of life; but as God would have it, while Apollyon was fetching of his last blow, thereby to make a full end of this good man, Christian nimbly stretched out his hand for his sword, and caught it, saying, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall I shall arise" (Mic. vii. 8); and with that he gave him a deadly thrust, which made him give back, as one that had received his mortal wound. Christian perceiving that, made at him again, saying, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. viii. 37). And with that Apollyon spread forth his dragon's wings, and sped him away, that Christian for a season saw him no more (Jas. iv. 7).

The passage in which Bunyan describes the end of Christian's pilgrimage is instinct with unforced beauty:

Thus, therefore, they walked on together; and as they walked, ever and anon these trumpeters, even with joyful sound, would, by mixing their music with looks and gestures, still signify to Christian and his brother, how welcome they were into their company and with what gladness they came to meet them; and now were these two men, as it were, in heaven, before they came at it, being swallowed up with the sight of angels, and with hearing of their melodious notes. Here also they had the city itself in view, and they thought they heard all the bells therein to ring, to welcome them thereto. But above all, the warm and joyful thoughts that they had about their own dwelling there, with such company, and that for ever and ever. Oh, by what tongue or pen can their glorious joy be expressed! And thus they came up to the gate.

In the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* Bunyan describes how Christian's wife and family made the same journey, met the same difficulties, and reached the same goal. Froude is unquestionably right when he points out that in this sequel Bunyan's simplicity is marred by a certain mawkish sentimentality. There are, however, many magnificent passages in this second part. In all English literature there is no finer and more inspiring description of the death of the good man than Bunyan's "*So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.*"

Bunyan died in 1688. He had travelled on horseback from Bedford to Reading in order to endeavour to compose a family quarrel. He succeeded, but on his journey back he was caught in a storm, which brought on a fever, and he died at a friend's house in London. He was buried in Bunhill Fields. His last words were: "Take me, for I come to Thee."

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# XV

# PEPYS, DRYDEN, AND THE RESTORATION DRAMATISTS

## § 1

### PEPYS

SAMUEL PEPYS was born in 1633. His father was a shiftless, muddle-headed man who, after being for some years an unsuccessful tailor in London, retired to a village near Huntingdon, where he had inherited a small estate which brought him an income of eighty pounds a year. Samuel was educated at St. Paul's School in London and at Magdalene College, Cambridge; and when he was twenty-two, having little money and no prospects, he married the daughter of an impecunious Protestant refugee who was as irresponsible and unsuccessful as Samuel's father himself.

Soon after his marriage Sir Edward Montagu, afterwards Lord Sandwich, who was a connection of the Pepys family, engaged Samuel as a sort of confidential secretary, and he and his wife were given rooms in Montagu's London house. Years after, Pepys recalled how his wife used "to make coal fires, and wash my foul clothes with her own hands," in the early days of their married life.

Pepys held the appointment of "Clerk of the Acts of the Navy," and in 1673 he was appointed Secretary of the Admiralty, retaining his office until the Revolution of 1688 ended his official career. In 1690 he suffered a short imprisonment in the Tower on a charge of being concerned in some Jacobite intrigue. He died in his house at Clapham in 1703.

His famous Diary was begun in January 1660 and the last entry was made on May 31, 1669, increasing trouble

with his eyes preventing the diarist from making further entries. It was written in the system of shorthand invented by one Shelton in 1641, and apparently, in order to keep the more intimate records secret, the shorthand was interspersed with foreign words. The Diary fills six notebooks of about five hundred pages each, the first being an octave and the rest small quartos. On his death, Pepys left all his papers to Magdalene College, and there they remained unread until 1818. The manuscript was deciphered between 1819 and 1822, and the first edition of Pepys's Diary was published in 1825—a hundred and twenty-two years after his death.

In many respects Pepys's Diary is unique in literature. It contains many passages of intense human and literary interest, in which a very ordinary man has revealed the secret places of the heart. Such self-revealers as St. Augustine, Rousseau, and Bunyan were extraordinary men. But the peculiar charm and value of Pepys is that he was an everyday man who, with infinite labour and infinite enjoyment, recorded the small doings of his daily life. The Diary is amazingly candid; if nothing is said in malice, certainly nothing is extenuated. He made no attempt to hide his meannesses, his infidelities, or his quarrels with his wife, nor does he hide the fact that he thoroughly enjoyed his peccadilloes. Indeed, the outstanding fact about Pepys is that he thoroughly enjoyed his life, and that he obtained a sort of second enjoyment from recording its incidents, great and small, all of which had given him intense satisfaction.

Although he was a public official, frequently brought into contact with Charles II, and for years working in the Navy Office in close association with the Duke of York, afterwards James II, he never was inside Court circles. He lived the life of an industrious, fairly honest, middle-class public official, neat, tidy, and industrious, troubled a good deal by his impecunious relations and his wife's improvidence, and as eager to save money as to have a good time. As became a good citizen, Pepys loved a good dinner; nothing pleased him more than to record a satisfactory menu. He wrote in April 1663:

> Very merry at, before, and after dinner, and the more for that my dinner was great, and most neatly dressed by our own only maid. We

had a fricassee of rabbits and chickens, a leg of mutton boiled, three carps in a dish, a great dish of a side of lamb, a dish of roasted pigeons, a dish of four lobsters, three tarts, a lamprey pie (a most rare pie), a dish of anchovies, good wine of several sorts, and all things mighty noble and to my great content.



*Photo: Rischgitz Collection.*

SAMUEL PEPYS, PAINTED AT THE AGE OF THIRTY-FOUR, BY JOHN HAYLS

National Portrait Gallery, London.

This picture is circumstantially referred to in Pepys's own Diary.

Such an entry throws a vivid light on the manners and appetites of the seventeenth century; but it must be remembered that Pepys had only one meal a day. In his day this meal was generally eaten at noon, and was followed by nothing more than the lightest of suppers.

The relations between Pepys and his wife have an intense

human interest. He was constantly jealous of her without cause, and he loved to recapitulate the circumstances that would have given her, on her side, ample justification for jealousy. As it happened she was stupid and unsuspecting, until on one unhappy occasion she discovered him making love to her maid. She denounced him as " all the false, rotten-hearted rogues of the world," and he confessed that " I did endure the sorrow of her threats, vows, and curses all the afternoon."

After his appointment to the Navy Office, Pepys lived in a house close to Tower Hill between Crutched Friars and Seething Lane, and he was there during the Plague and the Great Fire, both of which he describes at length in the Diary. Love-making, theatre-going, and music were Pepys's chief delights. He frequented the taverns of the time mainly for society, for he was by no means intemperate, and he was too frugal to gamble. He shared the common Restoration contempt for Shakespeare. He considered *Romeo and Juliet* the worst play he had ever seen ; he called *Othello* " a mean thing," and he declared that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was " the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw." The staid and respectable Evelyn had the same opinion of Shakespeare, remarking once after seeing *Hamlet* that " the old plays begin to disgust in this refined age." According to the Diary Pepys saw a hundred and thirty-five different plays, many of them several times. Theatre prices in his day were a shilling, one and six, and two and six. Four shillings was the price of a seat in the upper boxes, but Pepys was never guilty of this extravagance till 1667. In 1661 he went to see one of Beaumont and Fletcher's comedies, and he notes that it was " the first time that ever I saw women come upon the stage." He entirely approved of the innovation, eulogising Nell Gwynne's performance in Dryden's *Secret Love*, and praising an actress called Mrs. Knipp as an " excellent mad-humoured thing." Evelyn, by the way, as became his stolid respectability, was of an entirely different opinion. In 1666 he wrote in his Diary : " Very seldom going to the public theatres for many reasons now as they were abused to an atheistical liberty ; foul and indecent women now (and never till now) permitted to appear and act."

The common idea of a "good time" in the reign of Charles II may be gathered from the entry in Pepys's Diary of August 14, 1666:

After dinner, with my wife and Mercer to the Beare Garden; where I have not been, I think, of many years, and saw some good sport of the bull's tossing the dogs—one into the very boxes. But it is a very rude and nasty pleasure. We had a great many hectors in the same box, and one very fine went into the pit, and played his dog for a wager; which was a strange sport for a gentleman; where they drank wine, and drank Mercer's health first; which I pledged with my hat off. We supped at home, and very merry. And then about nine to Mrs. Mercer's gate, where the fire and boys expected us, and her son had provided abundance of serpents and rockets; and there mighty merry, my Lady Pen and Pegg going thither with us, and Nan Wright, till about twelve at night, flinging our fireworks, and burning one another, and the people over the way.

And, at last, our business being most spent, we went into Mrs. Mercer's, and there mighty merry, smutting one another with candle grease and soot, till most of us were like devils. And that being done, then we broke up, and to my house; and there I made them drink, and upstairs we went, and then fell into dancing, W. Batelier dancing well; and dressing, him and I, and one Mr. Banister, who, with my wife, came over also with us, like women; and Mercer put on a suit of Tom's, like a boy, and mighty mirth we had, and Mercer danced a jig; and Nan Wright and my wife and Peggy Pen put on periwigs. Thus we spent till three or four in the morning, mighty merry; and then parted, and to bed.

Pepys was a good-natured materialist, caring not a little for the good things of this world, but he was not without a certain sincere religion; and while he had little culture and cared little for books, he had a genuine love for music, playing himself on the flageolet. He describes, in 1667, the effect that music has upon him:

With my wife to the King's House, to see *The Virgin Martyr*, the first time it hath been acted a great while; and it is mighty pleasant; not that the play is worth much, but it is finely acted by Beck Marshall. But that which did please me beyond anything in the whole world was the wind-music when the Angel comes down, which is so sweet that it ravished me, and indeed, in a word, did wrap up my soul so that it made me really sick, just as I have formerly been when in love with my wife; that neither then, nor all the evening going home, and at home, I was able to think of anything, but remained all night transported, so as I could not believe that ever any musick hath that real command over the soul of a man as did this upon me: and makes me resolve to practice wind-music, and to make my wife do the like.

The following are some characteristic extracts from the diary, selected as revealing Pepys's qualities, prejudices,

and manner of life. Mr. Pepys minutely records domestic happenings.

(Lord's day.) To church, and Mr. Mills made a good sermon: so home to dinner. My wife and I all alone to a leg of mutton, the sawce of which being made sweet, I was angry at it, and eat none, but only dined upon the marrow-bone that we had beside.

Waking this morning out of my sleep on a sudden, I did with my elbow hit my wife a great blow over her face and neck, which waked her with pain, at which I was sorry, and to sleep again.

Home, and found all well, only myself somewhat vexed at my wife's neglect in leaving of her scarfe, waistcoate, and night-dressings in the coach, to-day, that brought us from Westminster; though, I confess, she did give them to me to look after. It might be as good as 25*s.* loss.

(Lord's day.) I and my wife up to her closet, to examine her kitchen accounts, and there I took occasion to fall out with her, for her buying a laced handkercher and pinner without my leave. From this we began both to be angry, and so continued till bed.

Dined in my wife's chamber, she being much troubled with the tooth-ake, and I staid till a surgeon of hers come, one Leeson, who had formerly drawn her mouth, and he advised her to draw it; so I to the Office, and by and by word is come that she hath drawn it, which pleased me, it being well done. So I home, to comfort her.

The following are some of his reflections on books:

Up by 4 o'clock in the morning, and read Cicero's Second Oration against Catiline, which pleased me exceedingly; and more I discern therein than ever I thought was to be found in him; but I perceive it was my ignorance, and that he is as good a writer as ever I read in my life.

I away to my boat, and up with it as far as Barne Elmes, reading of Mr. Evelyn's late new book against Solitude, in which I do not find much excess of good matter, though it be pretty for a bye discourse.

To the Strand, to my bookseller's, and there bought an idle, rogueish French book, which I have bought in plain binding, avoiding the buying of it better bound, because I resolve, as soon as I have read it, to burn it, that it may not stand in the list of books, nor among them, to disgrace them if it should be found.

Pepys was a regular churchgoer and a stern critic of sermons:

(Lord's day.) A most tedious, unreasonable, and impertinent sermon, by an Irish doctor. His text was, "Scatter them, O Lord, that delight in warr." Sir W. Batten and I very much angry with the parson.

To church, and had a good plain sermon. At our coming in, the country-people all rose with so much reverence; and when the parson begins, he begins, "Right Worshipfull and dearly beloved" to us.

Pepys lived in troubled times, and wisely kept away from politics. He records, however, the more striking political events that followed the Restoration.

I went out to Charing Cross, to see Major-General Harrison hanged, drawn, and quartered; which was done there, he looking as cheerful as any man could do in that condition. He was presently cut down, and his head and heart shown to the people, at which there was great shouts of joy. It is said, that he said that he was sure to come shortly at the right hand of Christ to judge them that now had judged him; and that his wife do expect his coming again. Thus it was my chance to see the King beheaded at White Hall, and to see the first blood shed in revenge for the King at Charing Cross.

I saw several poor creatures carried by, by constables, for being at a conventicle. They go like lambs, without any resistance. I would to God they would either conform, or be more wise, and not be catched!

The theatre was Pepys's passion. Here are a few of the many references to it in the Diary:

To the Theatre, and there saw *Argalus and Parthenia*, where a woman acted Parthenia, and come afterwards on the stage in men's clothes, and had the best legs that ever I saw, and I was very well pleased with it.

Went to the Duke's house, the first play I have been at these six months, according to my last vowe, and here saw the so much cried-up play of *Henry the Eighth*, which, though I went with resolution to like it, is so simple a thing, made up of a great many patches, that, besides the shows and processions in it, there is nothing in the world good or well done.

To the Duke's house, and saw *Macbeth*, which though I saw it lately, yet appears a most excellent play in all respects, but especially in divertisement, though it be a deep tragedy; which is a strange perfection in a tragedy, it being most proper here, and suitable.

To the King's house, and there saw *The Tameing of a Shrew*, which hath some very good pieces in it, but generally is but a mean play.

To the King's playhouse, to see an old play of Shirly's, called *Hide Park*; the first day acted.

Pepys's epitaph was finely and justly written by Evelyn: "This day died Mr. Sam Pepys, a very worthy, industrious, and curious person, none in England exceeding him in knowledge of the navy, in which he had passed thro' all the most considerable offices, Clerk of the Acts and Secretary of the Admiralty, all which he performed with great integrity. When K. James II went out of England he laid down his office, and would serve no more, but withdrawing himselfe from all public affaires, he liv'd at Clapham

with his partner Mr. Hewer, formerly his clerk, in a very noble and sweet place, where he enjoyed the fruits of his labours in greate prosperity. He was universally belov'd, hospitable, generous, learned in many things, skill'd in music, a very greate cherisher of learned men of whom he had the conversation."

## § 2

### EVELYN'S DIARY

John Evelyn was a man of very different calibre. He was born in 1620 and lived till 1706. He was a member of a well-to-do family whose seat was in Dorking. Naturally a Royalist, he was prevented by a series of extraordinarily happy accidents from fighting with the Cavaliers, and he spent three of the troubled years of the Puritan Revolution in making a grand tour of Europe, the events of which are recorded in the first part of the Diary.

Returning to England, he went to live at Sayes Court in Deptford, spending most of the rest of his life "minding his books and his garden." Although Evelyn lived in the seventeenth century, he had all the eighteenth century love of artificiality. He disliked the forest of Fontainebleau because of its "hideous rocks." The Alps did not move him, but a "trim garden" filled him with extraordinary delight. He loved tortoises and apiaries and labyrinths—all the absolute artificiality which Horace Walpole also loved in his time. Horace Walpole, by the way, had a natural and intense admiration for Evelyn.

Evelyn lived an uneventful, useful, and dignified life, and the value of his Diary is that, just as Pepys tells us how the average uncultured seventeenth-century citizens lived, so Evelyn tells us how the God-fearing country gentleman lived, what he thought, and what were his prejudices and limitations. Evelyn occasionally went to Court, and for a while held public office; but he was equally out of sympathy with the raffishness of Charles II and the bigotry of his brother James.

We give an extract from the Diary which describes the Great Fire of London.

I went this morning on foote from White-hall as far as London Bridge, thro' the late Fleete Street, Ludgate Hill, by St. Paules, Cheapeside, Exchange, Bishopsgate, Aldersgate, and out to Moorefields, thence thro' Cornehill, &c. with extraordinary difficulty, clambering over heaps of yet smoking rubbish, and frequently mistaking where I was. The ground under my feete so hot, that it even burnt the soles of my shoes. In the mean time his Majesty got to the Tower by water, to demolish the houses about the graff, which being built intirely about it, had they taken fire and attack'd the White Tower where the magazine of powder lay, would undoubtedly not only have beaten downe and destroyed all the bridge, but sunke and torne the vessells in the river, and render'd the demolition beyond all expression for several miles about the countrey.

At my returne I was infinitely concern'd to find that goodly Church St. Paules now a sad ruine, and that beautifull portico (for structure comparable to any in Europe, as not long before repair'd by the late King), now rent in pieces, flakes of vast stone split asunder, and nothing remaining intire but the inscription in the architrave, shewing by whom it was built, which had not one letter of it defac'd. It was astonishing to see what immense stones the heate had in a manner calcin'd, so that all the ornaments, columnes, freezes, capitals, and projectures of massie Portland stone flew off, even to the very roofe, where a sheet of lead covering a great space (no lesse than 6 akers by measure) was totally mealted; the ruines of the vaulted roofe falling broke into St. Faith's, which being fill'd with the magazines of bookes belonging to the Stationers, and carried thither for safety, they were all consum'd, burning for a weeke following.

It is observable that the lead over the altar at the East end was untouch'd, and among the divers monuments, the body of one Bishop remain'd intire. Thus lay in ashes that most venerable Church, one of the most antient pieces of early piety in the Christian world, besides neere 100 more. The lead, yron worke, bells, plate, &c. mealted; the exquisitely wrought Mercers Chapell, the sumptuous Exchange, the august fabriq of Christ Church, all the rest of the Companies Halls, splendid buildings, arches, enteries, all in dust; the fountaines dried up and ruin'd; whilst the very waters remain'd boiling; the voragos of subterranean cellars, wells, and dungeons, formerely warehouses, still burning in stench and dark clowds of smoke, so that in five or six miles traversing about, I did not see one loade of timber unconsum'd, nor many stones but what were calcin'd white as snow. The people who now walk'd about the ruines appear'd like men in some dismal desart, or rather in some greate Citty laid waste by a cruel enemy; to which was added the stench that came from some poor creatures bodies, beds, and other conbustible goods. . . . Nor was I yet able to passe through any of the narrower streetes, but kept the widest; the ground and aire, smoake and fiery vapour, continu'd so intense that my haire was almost sing'd, and my feete unsufferably surbated. The bie lanes and narrower streetes were quite fill'd up with rubbish, nor could one have possibly knowne where he was, but by the ruines of some Church or Hall, that had some remarkable tower or pinnacle remaining. I then went towards Islington and Highgate, where one might have seene 200,000 people of all ranks and degree, dispers'd and lying along by their heapes of what they could save from

the fire, deploring their losse, and tho' ready to perish for hunger and destitution, yet not asking one pennie for reliefe, which to me appear'd a stranger sight than any I had yet beheld.

## § 3

### SAMUEL BUTLER

Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* is an "epic satire" on the extravagancies of the Puritans who were triumphant during the Commonwealth and became objects of popular dislike with the Restoration. Butler was born in Worcestershire in 1612. He took no personal part in the Civil War and was one of the many literary men of the time who were content to be spectators of the struggle between Parliament and King. Samuel Butler has been described by Andrew Lang as "a retired, bookish, sardonic humorist."

Pepys tells us that *Hudibras* was the most popular book of the day. Despite its popularity its author apparently received little financial benefit from it and, despite his devotion to the Royalist party, he received nothing from the King. Dryden said very bitterly: "It is enough for our age to have neglected Mr. Cowley and starved Mr. Butler."

Butler was influenced by Cervantes. Hudibras is the Presbyterian Don Quixote; Ralph, his squire, is an Independent Sancho Panza. The extravagancies of the Puritans are gibbeted with humour and learning. Referring to the Civil War and to the Puritans' love for change, Butler wrote:

> Call fire and sword and desolation
> A godly thorough Reformation,
> Which always must be carried on,
> And still be doing, never done,
> As if Religion were intended
> For nothing else than to be mended. . . .

Perhaps the best-known of Butler's lines are those in which he refers to the people who

> Compound for sins they are inclined to
> By damning those they have no mind to:
> Still so perverse and opposite
> As if they worshipped God for spite.

## § 4

### JOHN DRYDEN

Our knowledge of John Dryden, a great poet, who could also write a fine, flexible kind of prose, is strangely shadowy. He came of a family of some distinction in Northamptonshire, was born in 1631, and was educated at Westminster School and Trinity, Cambridge, taking his degree in 1654. For the rest we must depend for our portrait of the man-in-himself on a few anecdotes, some of them heard at third or fourth hand. Our first introduction to Dryden as a living human being comes from the lively Pepys. On February 3, 1664, Pepys tells us that he stopped at Will's and met there "Dryden, the poet I knew at Cambridge," and all the wits of the town. The company pleased the diarist, and he thinks "it will be good coming hither." The picture of "glorious John" at Will's, which Scott has made famous, is probably true to fact, and, as Professor Saintsbury says, there is no harm in thinking of Dryden in the great coffee-house, with his chair in the balcony in summer, by the fire in winter, passing criticisms and paying good-natured compliments on matters literary. We know also that he was fond of fishing, took a deal of snuff, did not drink much till led to do so by Addison, and had a very vulgar stomach, preferring a chine of bacon even to marrow puddings.

Dryden was the most various poet of his age. In "Absalom and Achitophel" (1681) we have the first polished satire in the language. Hitherto satire had been shrewd rough-and-ready quarter-staff play (as in Butler's *Hudibras*) or rugged versification (as in much of Marvell's and Donne's) through which the rhymes ring like breastplates smitten with a broadsword. Here is the famous character of Zimri (George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham) from this truly wonderful poem:

> A man so various that he seemed to be
> Not one, but all mankind's epitome;
> Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
> Was everything by starts and nothing long;
> But in the course of our revolving moon
> Was chymist, fiddler, statesman and buffoon;

Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.
Blest madman, who could every hour employ
With something new to wish or to enjoy!
Railing and praising were his usual themes,
And both, to show his judgment, in extremes;
So over violent or over civil
That every man with him was God or Devil.
In squandering wealth was his peculiar art;
Nothing went unrewarded but desert.
Beggared by fools whom still he found too late,
He had his jest, and they had his estate.

The wealth of irony, the sting in each couplet, the Shavian superciliousness of the banter—these were new things in English verse, and even Pope never surpassed Dryden's technique of obloquy. "MacFlecknoe" (1682) followed in the same mode, and the immortal flagellation of the dull and industrious Shadwell is as well known as the character of Buckingham. Flecknoe, absolute in all the realms of nonsense, settles which of his many sons shall succeed:

Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
Mature in dullness from his tender years;
Shadwell, alone, of all my sons, is he
Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence
But Shadwell never deviates into sense.

Afterwards, in the second part of "Absalom and Achitophel" he assails Og (Shadwell) once again with Doeg (Settle):

Who by my muse to all succeeding times
Shall live, in spite of their own doggerel rhymes.

"Religio Laici," which Scott regarded as one of the most admirable poems in the language, is a lively argument in verse on the credibility of the Christian faith and on the merits of the Church of England as a midway course, avoiding extremes, which had become an immortal institution because "common quiet is mankind's concern."

What, then, is chiefly left in Dryden for a reader of today? His many plays are hardly literature, and at any rate are dead. But his "Fables," which are long stories told in verse, are not excelled, as narratives, in any language. The reader who takes up "Cymon and Iphigenia," or "Palamon

and Arcite," is not likely to lay down the book until he has reached the end. They are little epics, and, in their finest passages, come nearer to the style of Homer than any other poems. His noble Odes will also be remembered, of which he thought "Alexander's Feast" the best, and indeed his most perfect poem. But the "Song for St. Cecilia's Day" is quite as fine, and the well-known lines upon the Birth of Music were never equalled by him in their sweet and noble beauty:

When Jubal struck the chorded shell
  His listening brethren stood around,
And, wondering, on their faces fell
  To worship that celestial sound.
Less than a god they thought there could not dwell
Within the hollow of that shell
Which spoke so sweetly and so well.

Johnson, on the other hand, pronounced the "Ode to the Memory of Mrs. Anne Killigrew" the noblest in the English tongue, and the following magnificent passage from it, as glorious a piece of stately word-music as is to be discovered in the long interval between Milton and Wordsworth, aptly closes this account of one of the greatest of English poets:

Thou youngest virgin-daughter of the skies,
  Made in the last promotion of the blessed;
Whose palms, new plucked from Paradise,
In spreading branches more sublimely rise,
  Rich with immortal green above the rest:
Whether, adopted to some neighbouring star,
Thou rollest above us, in thy wandering race,
  Or, in procession fixed and regular
  Movest with the heaven's majestic pace;
  Or, called to more superior bliss,
Thou treadest with seraphims the vast abyss:
Whatever happy region is thy place,
Cease thy celestial song a little space;
Thou wilt have time enough for hymns divine,
  Since Heaven's eternal year is thine.
Hear, then, a mortal Muse thy praise rehearse,
      In no ignoble verse;
But such as thy own voice did practise here,
When thy first fruits of Poesy were given,
To make thyself a welcome inmate there;
    While yet a young probationer,
      And candidate of heaven.

## § 5

### THE RESTORATION DRAMATISTS

The theatre, which had been banned during the Puritan rule in England, came back to its own with the Restoration of Charles II. Later seventeenth-century opinion held Shakespeare in small esteem, and the older plays of Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Shirley soon gave way to a new order of drama that was the creation of the spirit of the new times. While Charles II was reigning in England, Molière was writing in France, and it was natural and inevitable that the Restoration dramatists should have been influenced by the great French master of comedy. What they did not borrow from France was directly inspired by the atmosphere of the Court of Charles II. Charles Lamb insisted that the old comedy " has no reference whatever to the world that is." That is happily true : but it had a very considerable reference to the world that existed when the second Charles frivolled at Whitehall. William Congreve was the most considerable of the Restoration dramatists. Swinburne declared that his *The Way of the World* is " the unequalled and unapproached masterpiece of English comedy : the one play in our language which may fairly claim a place beside, or but just beneath, the mightiest work of Molière." Voltaire, who had heard of his genius, called on him during his stay in England, and Congreve expressed a wish not to be regarded as a dramatist but as a gentleman ; whereupon the sardonic French philosopher apologised for his call. William Wycherley was thirty years older than Congreve. He was brought up in Paris, and his first play, *Love in a Wood*, was produced in 1672. His fame as a dramatist mainly rests on his two comedies, *The Country Wife* and *A Plain Dealer*, both coarse enough to justify Macaulay's nausea, but both excellent in their characterisation and their humour.

Other dramatists of the period of less importance are John Vanbrugh, the architect of Blenheim Palace, George Etheridge, Otway, and Lee, who collaborated with Dryden in imitations of Corneille. Dryden himself is a Restoration

dramatist, but he was far more than a dramatist, as we have seen.

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# XVI

## FRENCH LITERATURE IN THE AGE OF LOUIS XIV

### § 1

PASCAL, one of the few French writers of genius of the first half of the seventeenth century, was a very definite Puritan. He was born in 1623, and was a mathematician as well as a theologian and a great writer. In his *Lettres Provinciales* and his *Pensées*, Pascal deals with the great problems of life, the miserable insufficiency of all that is human and the consuming glory of God. No Anglo-Saxon writer ever emphasised more fiercely the pitiful impotence of man as compared with the infinite, no religious fanatic ever more vehemently admonished humiliation, no philosopher was ever more awestruck by the greatness of the universe in which man is so small a thing. Looking to the heavens Pascal exclaimed: "The eternal silence of those infinite spaces fills me with fear."

Many of his "Thoughts," brief, striking, and profound, are as familiar as household words in almost every land. Here are a few typical examples:

"Man is but a reed, the weakest thing in nature, but he is a thinking reed."

"The heart has reasons of its own, of which Reason never dreams."

"If the nose of Cleopatra had been shorter the whole history of the earth would have been changed."

The idea of ensuring the correctness of the French language, of establishing a recognised standard of literary taste, and of creating a literary authority, owed much to Cardinal Richelieu, who set up the French Academy in 1629. The Cardinal desired order and authority in literature as in everything else. While the French Academy has given literature a place in national life that it has never had in

England, it has always made a conservative resistance to every new literary development, and some of the greatest of French writers, including Molière and Flaubert, have never been elected to a seat among the " Immortals." One of the earliest acts of the Academy was to belittle the first work of genius to be produced in France in the seventeenth century—Pierre Corneille's *Le Cid*.

Pierre Corneille was born at Rouen in 1606, and his first play was produced in 1636. Corneille lived until 1684, and his later plays belong to the era of Louis XIV. He stands in literary history as the forerunner of the great century of French literature rather than as one of its actual figures. Corneille was by nature a romantic ; he loved words as much as Rabelais loved them. He was as fond of rhetoric as Marlowe, and of tempestuous melodrama as Webster or any other of the Elizabethans.

Corneille was a very unequal writer. Molière once said : " My friend Corneille has a familiar spirit that inspires him to write the finest verses in the world. Sometimes the familiar spirit leaves him to look after himself, and then he writes very badly." His genius was justly recognised in his own time ; but later critics, including Voltaire, rated him as a writer of small importance.

The great French philosopher, René Descartes, published his *Discours de la Méthode* within a few months of the appearance of *Le Cid*. It is outside the scope of this OUTLINE to attempt any summary of the mathematical and metaphysical speculations with which the fame of Descartes is associated, but he has a considerable place in the history of French literature as a master of a clear and simple style. He was born in 1596 and died in Stockholm in 1650. His first book, a treatise on fencing, was written when he was sixteen, and from then to the end of his life he was an industrious and voluminous writer.

## § 2

### MOLIÈRE

Molière was the stage name of Jean Baptiste Poquelin, who was born in Paris in 1622, his father being a Court upholsterer. Molière was educated by the Jesuits, translated

Lucretius, read Aristotle, and was sufficiently educated to defend Descartes. Like many another young man, Molière might have been a successful upholsterer and have succeeded his father as a Court tradesman. But he preferred to be an actor. When he was twenty he organised a company of players, hired a Paris tennis-court, and fitted it up with a stage for dramatic performances. The time, however, was ill-fitted for theatrical success. Paris was in a constant state of political ferment; the streets were none too safe, and the citizens were in no mood for the play. Molière and his comrades acted in various tennis-courts, but everywhere with the same lack of success. In 1645, indeed, he was imprisoned for a time for not paying for the candles used in the theatre.

After four years' persistent failure in Paris, Molière determined to seek his fortune in the provinces; and for the next ten years he lived the life of a strolling-player, in those days one of hardship and adventure—very much, indeed, the same as the life led by nineteenth-century English showmen as described by Dickens in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. When the temporary stage had been erected in a tennis-court or barn, it was hung round with tapestries, and the actors made their entrances and exits by struggling through heavy curtains. The hall was generally lighted by a chandelier holding four candles, and suspended from the ceiling; and it was customary every now and again to let down the chandelier with a rope and pulley that some kindly soul in the audience might snuff the candles with his fingers.

Molière was a tall, amiable, kind-hearted man, generous, honest, and good-humoured. "His nose was thick, his mouth large with thick lips, his complexion brown, his eyebrows black and strongly marked, and it was his way of moving them that gave him his comic expression on the stage." All his contemporaries agreed in regarding him as a great comic actor as well as a dramatist of genius. Molière's masterpieces are *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, *Tartuffe*, *Le Misanthrope*, and *La Malade Imaginaire*, all of which hold the stage to-day as securely as the comedies and tragedies of Shakespeare himself.

What are the qualities of a writer to whom critical



*Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.*

"LA MALADE IMAGINAIRE," BY C. R. LESLIE, R.A.
South Kensington Museum.

opinion gives so high a praise? His great achievement was the creation of French comedy. He was a realist interested in the life of the people of his own time. He was as impressed as Chaucer and as Shakespeare with the humour and the drama of ordinary everyday life. Thus, in the *Précieuses Ridicules* he laughs at a set of women with literary affectations, a pose of France in 1650 as it has been a pose in England and America in later times; in *Tartuffe* he laughs rather bitterly at hypocrisy, and in the *Malade Imaginaire* he gibes at doctors. In the *Misanthrope*, perhaps the greatest of all his plays, he has, in the character of the hero, Alceste, chosen himself for a hero—a sensitive, lonely, disillusioned man, standing in a little dark lonely corner, pitted against a cold, superficial, unsympathetic world.

The incidents in Molière's plays are few and are carefully chosen, and he is concerned all the time with the development of character. Every incident and every situation, which would not serve to make his characters clearer to the audience, is rejected. Nor is he concerned with more than the outstanding characteristics of each person he puts on the stage. He paints in broad outline, and not in infinite detail. For example, Tartuffe is a hypocrite, who loves women and loves power. That is all that Molière tells us about him; that is all we need to know about him for the purpose of his play.

Like all great humorists, Molière is tolerant. He is never angry, even with his villains, for they too are human, and are as they are. He does not defend them or apologise for them, but he describes with accuracy and without passion, recognising that all human beings have a certain dignity whatever their shortcomings.

Perhaps the best known of Molière's comedies is the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. Molière himself was the original Jourdain, a part associated with the fame of the great modern French actor Coquelin. Jourdain is a rich shopkeeper with an itch to get into society. In order that he may acquire a proper manner and an appropriate vocabulary, he engages a music master, a dancing master, a fencing master, and a teacher of philosophy, from the latter of whom he learns that "there is nothing by which we can

express ourselves except prose or verse." Jourdain is astounded. "'Pon my word," he says, "I have been speaking prose these forty years without being aware of it."

The music master, the dancing master, and the fencing master quarrel, and these professors, together with Jourdain's new tailor, make him a ridiculous figure of fun. But though Madame Jourdain may laugh at him, his aristocratic friend, Comte Dorante, approves of his escapades—and borrows his money. So completely turned is Jourdain's head that he refuses to allow his daughter to marry a young man of his own class until the suitor dresses up in Oriental garments and professes that he is the son of the Grand Turk. The *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* is a farce with the thinnest of plots, but its stagecraft is deft, its characterisation admirably humorous, and its dialogue delightfully witty.

Molière's career is more remarkable when it is remembered that all through his life he was not only a busy actor-manager, but that he was also continually exposed to the intrigues of his enemies—jealous rivals, and indignant churchmen, who, for reasons which are hard for us to understand, persistently denounced him as the enemy of God. The enmity of the Church continued even after his death. An eye-witness of Molière's funeral says:

> There was no procession, except three ecclesiastics; four priests bore the body in a wooden bier covered with a pall, six children in blue carried candles in silver holders, and there were lackeys with burning torches of wax. The body . . . was taken to St. Joseph's churchyard, and buried at the foot of the cross. There was a great crowd, and some twelve hundred livres were distributed among the poor. The archbishop had given orders that Molière should be interred without any ceremony, and had even forbidden the clergy of the diocese to do any service for him.

From the first time that he acted before him to his death, Louis XIV extended constant favour and patronage to Molière, and even when the days of the king's worldliness had come to an end, and, under the influence of Madame de Maintenon, Versailles had acquired the air of a conventicle, the great dramatist retained the royal favour. But even this had its drawbacks, because it meant an enormous expenditure of time in writing masques and arranging entertainments.

As a writer Molière's influence may be to some extent

estimated by the manner in which he has affected the language of his country. Every day English speech is interlarded with quotations from Shakespeare, Milton, and Dickens, and no writer has given as many sentences and phrases to colloquial French as Molière. At least one of them, " Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère ? " has almost become English.

Mr. Lytton Strachey says : " In the literature of France Molière occupies the same kind of position as Cervantes in that of Spain, Dante in that of Italy, and Shakespeare in that of England." And Andrew Lang declared : " In the literature of France his is the greatest name, and in the literature of modern drama the greatest after that of Shakespeare."

## § 3

### JEAN RACINE

Racine has always appeared to English readers a dull writer, but in France not only are his plays still acted but he is regarded by most Frenchmen as the supreme French writer. This is due, apart from the sheer beauty of his verse, to the complete and unrivalled success with which he achieved the French ideal of compression of incident, unity of time, and the avoidance of everything that was irrelevant to the theme of his play.

Jean Racine was born in 1639. His family were Jansenists —the French Puritans—and he was educated at the famous convent of Port-Royal. His early devotion to literature was naturally resented by his devout relations. In one of his letters he complains that a sonnet he wrote on Mazarin had brought him excommunication on excommunication. His first play, *La Thébaïde*, was produced by Molière's company in 1664, and it is possible that Molière himself acted in it. Molière also produced Racine's second play, *Alexandre le Grand*. A fortnight afterwards the dramatist took his play to a rival company, apparently having quarrelled with Molière. For ten years Racine continued writing play after play. His masterpieces are : *Andromaque*, *Phèdre*, and *Athalie*.

In 1673 he was elected to the French Academy. *Phèdre*

was produced in 1677, and although Racine lived for another twenty years, in this play his writing practically came to an end. He repented of the loose life he had led, married, and settled down to a quiet, domestic life, living on a pension granted to him by Louis XIV. He died on April 12, 1699.

*Phèdre* is the best known of Racine's plays. Every French actress of talent still desires to appear at least once as Phèdre, just as every English actor of talent persists in playing Hamlet. It is a tragedy founded on the Greek, with many variations; a tremendous drama of horror, mystery, and jealousy, conveying something of the Greek dogma that man is helpless in the hands of Fate. His earlier play, *Andromaque*, illustrates Racine's power to contrive dramatic effects with the smallest number of characters and incidents. There are only four characters in the play—two men and two women. Mr. Lytton Strachey has very deftly summarised the story:

> Andromaque, the still youthful widow of Hector, cares for only two things in the world with passionate devotion—her young son Astyanax and the memory of her husband Both are the captives of Pyrrhus, the conqueror of Troy, a straightforward, chivalrous, but somewhat barbarous prince, who, though he is affianced to Hermione, is desperately in love with Andromaque. Hermione is a splendid tigress, consumed by her desire for Pyrrhus; and Oreste is a melancholy, almost morbid man, whose passion for Hermione is the dominating principle of his life. These are the ingredients of the tragedy, ready to explode like gunpowder with the slightest spark. The spark is lighted when Pyrrhus declares to Andromaque that if she will not marry him he will execute her son.
>
> Andromaque consents, but decides secretly to kill herself immediately after the marriage, and thus ensure both the safety of Astyanax and the honour of Hector's wife. Hermione, in a fury of jealousy, declares that she will fly with Oreste, on one condition—that he kills Pyrrhus. Oreste, putting aside all considerations of honour and friendship, consents; he kills Pyrrhus, and then returns to his mistress to claim his reward.
>
> There follows one of the most violent scenes that Racine ever wrote—in which Hermione, in an anger of remorse and horror, turns upon her wretched lover and denounces his crime. Forgetful of her own instigation, she demands who it was that suggested to him the horrible deed—"Qui te l'a dit?" she shrieks: one of those astounding phrases which, once heard, can never be forgotten. She rushes out to commit suicide, and the play ends with Oreste upon the stage.

In character Racine was the antithesis of Molière. He was jealous, arrogant, and irritable, with a bitter tongue,

and the unfortunate habit of preferring a biting epigram to a friend. Thanks to the intrigue of one of the ladies at Court, *Phèdre* was a comparative failure, and this was the reason why Racine abandoned play-writing at the height of his power. He lacked the humour necessary to accept criticism with amusement.

## § 4

### JEAN DE LA FONTAINE AND CHARLES PERRAULT

Jean de la Fontaine was born in 1621 at Château Thierry in Champagne. His father was a well-to-do deputy ranger, and Jean was his eldest child. He was educated at the college of his native town, and thought of taking Holy Orders ; but before it was too late, found that he had mistaken his vocation. He then studied Law, until, in 1647, his father resigned his rangership in his son's favour, and arranged also a profitable marriage for him, with a young girl of sixteen, who brought him a dowry of 20,000 livres. Spiritually the marriage was not a success. We gather that Madame de la Fontaine read too many novels and neglected her housework, and after ten years they were separated.

La Fontaine was over thirty years of age before he began to write, and then he did not at once discover himself as a fabulist, but after the fashion of the period, wrote epigrams and ballads, and sought for patrons to whom he could flatteringly dedicate his poems, receiving in return worldly protection and financial benefits.

The fables of La Fontaine are, first of all, striking for their easy grace. He was poet and philosopher, as well as fabulist. La Fontaine's animals are never real animals. Unlike Fabre, he has no secrets to tell us of the inner life of the dumb creation. But he has a genius for describing the essential exteriors of each animal, and, as has been well said, La Fontaine's animals are real animals with human minds.

Something of the charm of La Fontaine's writing may be gathered from the following translation of one of the fables :

THE JAY IN THE FEATHERS OF THE PEACOCK

A peacock moulted: soon a jay was seen
Bedeck'd with Argus tail of gold and green.
High strutting, with elated crest,
As much a peacock as the rest.
His trick was recognised and bruited,
His person jeer'd at, hiss'd, and hooted.
The peacock gentry flocked together,
And pluck'd the fool of every feather.
Nay more, when back he sneak'd to join his race,
They shut their portals in his face.

There is another sort of jay,
The number of its legs the same,
Which makes of borrowed plumes display,
And plagiary is its name
But hush! the tribe I'll not offend;
'Tis not my work their ways to mend.

## § 5

If La Fontaine developed the bald fable into a little human story, instead of merely an anecdote of beasts, his contemporary Charles Perrault gave it yet another lift into popularity by his introduction of the fairy element. Perrault realised that there are some human wishes so far beyond realisation that only magic can bring them about.

It has been said that there are only half a dozen plots in the whole realm of fiction; at least one of them is the story of the ragged girl who sits in the chimney-corner, and wishes she could go to the ball and dance with the Prince. And it was Perrault who first created Cinderella. These are the titles of his familiar stories, which are legendary folk-tales, collected by him and retold in his own vivid and charming style: *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* (*Little Red Riding-hood*); *La Belle au Bois Dormant* (*The Sleeping Beauty*); *La Barbe-Bleue* (*Bluebeard*); *Le Maistre Chat, ou Le Chat Botté* (*Puss in Boots*); *Les Fées* (*The Fairy*); *Ceudrion, ou La Petite Pantoufle de Vair* (*Cinderella*); *Riquet à la Houppe* (*Riquet of the Tuft*); *Le Petit Poucet* (*Hop-o'-my-Thumb*); and *La Belle et la Bête* (*Beauty and the Beast*).

These, as everybody knows, have become *the* fairy-tales of the world. It is difficult to realise that they were

definitely the leisure products of a seventeenth-century French nobleman, who rated them far below his more ponderous publications, which have long ago been forgotten.

## § 6

The later writers of the Louis XIV era included Boileau, who did much to create a French classic tradition ; Madame de Sévigné, author of a series of letters that reveal the age of Louis XIV, something in the same way as such a book as Evelyn's Diary reveals the time of Charles II ; and La Bruyère, moralist and pessimist, who anticipated the social criticism of the eighteenth century and who has left us an ironic picture of the celebration of Mass at Versailles, in which the courtiers turned their faces to the King and their backs to God.

La Rochefoucauld, author of the famous book of *Maximes*, was an aristocrat. In this respect he differed from every other distinguished writer of the age of Louis XIV. Cold, disillusioned, as worldly in his philosophy as Chesterfield, the following extracts from the *Maximes* are characteristic of the man, and characteristic of the age, the splendour, and glory, which were the preparation of the horrors of the Revolution.

The simplest man with passion is more persuasive than the most eloquent without it.

We have all of us sufficient fortitude to bear the misfortunes of others.

Philosophy triumphs easily over past and over future evils, but present evils triumph easily over philosophy.

Old men are fond of giving good advice, to console themselves for being no longer in a position to give bad examples.

Hypocrisy is the homage which vice renders to virtue.

Gratitude is like the good faith of traders, it maintains commerce ; and we often pay, not because it is just to discharge our debts, but that we may more readily find people to trust.

We should often be ashamed of our best actions, if the world were witness to the motives which produce them.

None but the contemptible are apprehensive of contempt.

We are often more agreeable through our faults than through our good qualities.

Fortune breaks us of many faults which reason cannot.
None are either so happy or so unhappy as they imagine.
The head is always the dupe of the heart.

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# XVII

# POPE, ADDISON, STEELE, SWIFT

## § 1

### ALEXANDER POPE

ALEXANDER POPE, born in 1688, was the greatest poet of his age and one of the greatest versifiers of all ages. "Hard as thy heart, and as thy birth obscure," wrote one of his innumerable enemies, but there seems no reason to doubt that his father was a well-to-do linen-draper. His character was as malformed as his puny body, and when contemplating his detestable pettiness, it is well to act on the charitable advice of Mr. Augustine Birrell and "remember that, during his whole maturity, he could neither dress nor undress himself, go to bed or get up without help, and that on rising he had to be invested with a stiff canvas bodice and tightly laced, and have put on him a fur doublet and numerous stockings to keep off the cold and fill out his shrunken form." His life was a long disease; his lifelong bitterness must be charitably excused. It was a "noble rage" for learning, an insatiable curiosity for exploring human nature which wrecked a feeble health that eighteenth-century medicine could hardly have improved. He was extraordinarily sensitive; he loathed every kind of sport in which some living creature was pursued. His wit was his only weapon and he used it ruthlessly—often treacherously, and never with the bluff, open straightforwardness which causes some of Dryden's strokes to sound like a slap. His mind was a clearing-house for all the scandalous gossip, and he was a specialist in the ignoble art of quarrelling. He had no chivalry in his crippled soul—he satirised Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, to whom he made violent love, in the most brutal lines ever written by man against woman. He hated his literary rivals, great or



*Photo; Rischgitz Collection.*

"THE REJECTED POET. LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU AND POPE," BY W. P. FRITH, R.A.

Wolverhampton Art Gallery.

Pope made love to Lady Mary Montagu and afterwards lampooned her.

small; he includes Bentley and Defoe among the dunces of his "Dunciad," which too often rises to a shriek, a shrill feminism, to be equal to the virile satires of Dryden. And, as a punishment, the sarcasm of the merest scribbler caused him to writhe in anguish. Indeed, the venomous poet's

character and curses tax our charity at times beyond its power.

Pope had a double power. He could crystallise the plain man's thoughts into memorable verse and he could express thoughts of the subtlest ingenuity. Next to Shakespeare, he is the most often quoted (and misquoted) of English poets. He is easily the most elegant versifier of his age, and there is no question of his right to be regarded as a true poet.

Pope, living his sheltered life and not having to struggle for a livelihood, soon made his mark. His "Pastorals" (published 1709) were actually preferred by one critic to Virgil's "Eclogues"! They prove his zeal for "correctness" and something of the genius for taking infinite pains. In 1711 he put forth his "Essay on Criticism," which, though unequal, is a wonderful achievement for a youth of twenty-one, for it was written in 1709. Here is a famous passage:

> A little learning is a dangerous thing;
> Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:
> There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
> And drinking largely sobers us again.

The "Rape of the Lock," complete with its "machinery" of sylphs and gnomes, appeared in 1714, and was acclaimed as a masterpiece of wit. It is in form perfect of its kind, with the brilliancy of a piece of Dresden china and something, it may be, of its hardness. Here is the description of the lock of hair, the theft of which was the cause of such disaster:

> This nymph, to the destruction of mankind,
> Nourished two locks, which graceful hung behind,
> In equal curls, and well conspired to deck
> With shining ringlets the smooth ivory neck.
> Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,
> And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.
> With hairy springes we the birds betray,
> Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,
> Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,
> And beauty draws us with a single hair.

His next great work was his translations of Homer's Poems, which have rapidity and nobleness, two at any rate of the

qualities required of so daring an adventurer. The "Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady" and "Eloisa to Abelard" are to be read as illustrations of his serious manner. If the latter falls short of the piercing passion of the immortal love-story, there is yet a deep understanding of the human heart in these lines:

> Assist me, heav'n! but whence arose that pray'r
> Sprung it from piety or from despair?
> Ev'n here, where frozen chastity retires,
> Love finds an altar for forbidden fires.
> I ought to grieve, but cannot what I ought;
> I mourn the lover, not lament the fault;
> I view my crime, but kindle at the view,
> Repent old pleasures, and solicit new;
> Now turn'd to heav'n, I weep my past offence,
> Now think of thee, and curse my innocence.
> Of all affliction taught a lover yet,
> 'Tis sure the hardest science to forget!

In "The Dunciad" (first complete edition, 1729)—written at his leisure despite Swift's warning: "Take care that the bad poets do not outwit you," and the fact that the dullards satirised were dying off one by one out of sheer stupid perversity—we have the most elaborate, if not the most effective, satire in the language. The freshness and unageing force of the satire reside in its universal appeal, for it attacks that inexpugnable power of stupidity, enthroned in every age, against which the gods themselves strive in vain. The best passage is the last of all, in which the extinction of all intelligence, all the arts and sciences, is fantastically foretold—a piece of very noble verse—

> In vain, in vain—the all-composing hour
> Resistless falls: the Muse obeys the power.
> She comes! she comes! the sable throne behold
> Of night primæval and of Chaos old!
> Before her, fancy's gilded clouds decay,
> And all its varying rainbows die away.
> Wit shoots in vain its momentary fires.
> The meteor drops, and in a flash expires.
> As one by one, at dread Medea's strain,
> The sick'ning stars fade off th' ethereal plain;
> As Argus' eyes by Hermes' wand opprest,
> Clos'd one by one to everlasting rest;
> Thus at her feit approach, and secret might,
> Art after art goes out, and all is night.

See skulking Truth to her old cavern fled,
Mountains of casuistry heap'd o'er her head!
Philosophy, that lean'd on Heav'n before,
Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more.
Physic of metaphysic begs defence,
And metaphysic calls for aid on sense!
See mystery to mathematics fly!
In vain! they gaze, turn giddy, rave, and die.
Religion blushing veils her sacred fires,
And unawares morality expires.
Nor public flame, nor private, dares to shine;
Nor human spark is left, nor glimpse divine!
Lo! thy dread empire, Chaos! is restor'd;
Light dies before thy uncreating word;
Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall,
And universal darkness buries all.

But finer, perhaps, than anything in "The Dunciad" is the passage in the *Satires* which holds up to ridicule Lord Hervey under the name of "Sporus":

Let Sporus tremble—What? that thing of silk,
Sporus, that mere white curd of ass's milk?
Satire or sense, alas! can Sporus feel?
Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?
Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings,
This painted child of dirt, that stinks and stings;
Amphibious thing! that acting either part,
The trifling head or the corrupted heart,
Fop at the toilet, flatterer at the board,
Now trips a lady, and now struts a lord.
Eve's tempter thus the Rabbins have exprest,
A cherub's face, a reptile all the rest;
Beauty that shocks you, parts that none will trust;
Wit that can creep, and pride that licks the dust.

To-day, however, the "Essay on Man" is the most real of all Pope's poems. It gave him a European reputation, winning the warm admiration of Voltaire and others who had the ear of the civilised world. It is not, as Pope believed, a real contribution to philosophy. Modern criticism, in appraising its ethical value, steers a midway course between the extravagant compliment of Dugald Stewart, who called it "the noblest specimen of philosophical poetry which our language affords," and the extravagant condemnation of De Quincey, who dismissed it as "the real-

isation of anarchy." It contains constantly quoted lines such as :

An honest man's the noblest work of God,

which set forth in the fewest and most emphatic words possible thoughts which are always in men's minds. The crowd-compelling power of such ever-popular poems consists in the fact that they say in memorable phrases, with a simple, striking imagery, what the average man thinks—or thinks he thinks—about the great problems of human life, here and in the hereafter. Everybody can appreciate the familiar image in the following lines :

God loves from Whole to Parts: but human soul
Must rise from Individual to the Whole.
Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,
As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;
The centre mov'd, a circle straight succeeds,
Another still, and still another spreads;
Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace;
His country next; and next all human race;
Wide and more wide, th' o'erflowings of the mind
Take ev'ry creature in, of ev'ry kind;
Earth smiles around, with boundless bounty blest,
And Heav'n beholds its image in his breast.

None the less it is a part of the poet's many-sided art thus to refurbish a truism into a truth, and out of a platitude create a proverbial saying. Pope's "Moral Essays" are full of the lines that have attained almost the currency of proverbs. They teach us to search "the ruling passion," and to admire the proofs of potency even in the hour of death, as in such humorous instances as Narcissa's :

"Odious! in woollen! 'twould a saint provoke"
(Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke).
"No, let a charming chintz, and Brussels lace
Wrap my cold limbs and shade my lifeless face:
One would not, sure, be frightful when one's dead—
And—Betty—give this cheek a little red."

Sometimes Pope's faculty of proverb-making takes a loftier flight, as in the famous epitaph intended for Sir Isaac Newton :

Nature and Nature's Laws lay hid in night:
God said, "*Let Newton be!*" And all was light.

But it is Pope's strength, and his weakness also, that he expressed the mind of the average man who judges his fellow-creatures from a practical standpoint, by their words and works, and not by their intentions, and those rare and thrilling intimations of better, braver things which are the stuff of the greatest poetry.



*Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.*

SCENE FROM "THE BEGGAR'S OPERA," BY HOGARTH.

National Gallery, London.

Gay, who wrote *The Beggar's Opera*, was a contemporary of Pope, and the revival of his famous opera has served to demonstrate his Gilbertian humour.

John Gay, the author of *The Beggar's Opera*, was the best beloved of Pope's circle of friends. Pope described him :

> Of manners gentle, of affection mild;
> In art a man, simplicity a child.

He wrote comedies and fables, but *The Beggar's Opera*—a foretaste of Gilbertian topsy-turvydom—made him famous, and when its sequel, *Polly*, was prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain, its publication made Gay comparatively well

off. Gay was buried in Westminster Abbey, and his monument bears his own line:

> Life is a jest and all things show it:
> I thought so once and now I know it.

## § 2

### ADDISON AND STEELE

We come to the rise of the English Essay as we now understand this form of English literature. It may be noted that the early years of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries were all favourable to the periodical essay in this country. In the first of these three periods Addison and Steele socialised the essay, so to speak; they brought it into everyday life and made it familiar and delightful to the multitude. In the hands of imitators like Fielding, Johnson, Goldsmith, Shenstone, Bonnell Thornton, and others, the essay remained popular, though less distinguished, throughout the century of its rebirth. Early in the nineteenth century it became more definitely a means of intsmate self-expression in the hands of Lamb, and Hazlitt, and De Quincey; and its later prosperity as a literary form needs no indication. To-day its popularity seems steadily to increase. It is now a self-existing form of literary expression. But the essay of Addison and Steele was rather a new and elevated kind of journalism, designed to form and unite public opinion in an age when newspapers were few and had little or no moral influence.

The opportunity was there and these essayists took it. In the dawn of the eighteenth century English society lacked cohesion and tone. The events of the previous half-century had left many sullen divisions. Puritanism and the Established Church still watched each other in fear and suspicion. The Court had been vitiated by Charles II, and immorality had become nothing less than a fashionable cult with a stock of ideas and shibboleths which are reflected in the artificialities and indecencies of the Restoration comedies. The party system, which was to give power and direction to Parliament and to purify statesmanship, was only in formation. London and the country were separated by

physical and spiritual gulfs which we can hardly realise. It was into such a world that Steele and Addison brought their urbane wisdom, their reconciling wit, and their gospel of decency, kindliness, and right reason.

Undoubtedly the inventive element in this new literature was Steele's. He it was who conceived the *Tatler*. His previous career may be briefly summarised. Born in Dublin in 1672, he had met Addison, a schoolfellow, at the Charterhouse. There were but two months between their ages. They met again at Oxford, but Steele left the university to go soldiering. As private, ensign, and captain, he learnt something of the prodigal habits which helped him to interpret human nature and its foibles in the *Tatler* with a touch sympathetic, yet half monitory. He wrote his first book, *The Christian Hero*, while he was still an ensign, in order to correct his "propensity to unwarrantable pleasures." That was in 1701; but his friends in the Army, and the men about town, and in the end he himself, were not impressed by his moral and religious ideas in the book, and he went on to write plays.

His fourth play, *The Conscious Lovers*, fairly took the town, and Harley, the Whig Minister, bestowed on him the post of Gazetteer and Gentleman Usher at Court.

Meanwhile Addison's training had been more cosmopolitan, more that of a travelled scholar and man of culture, than Steele's. After ten years at Magdalen College, Oxford, where his portrait still hangs in the hall, while his favourite walk is pointed out on the banks of Cherwell, he decided against taking orders, and his literary experience began, like Montaigne's, with the writing of Latin verse.

His first English verse soon followed, and he used it adroitly to gain the ear of Dryden, who asked him for a critical preface to "The Georgics" of Virgil—a high honour from a past master. Dryden spoke of him as "the most ingenious W. Addison of Oxford"; and with that recognition his future seemed assured. But politics counted for much in Addison's life, as well as in Steele's: Addison was a good Whig, and his Whig friends got for him a travelling pension of £300 a year, to enable him to go abroad, learn French and Italian, and qualify for a diplomatic career. This leads to his travels in France and Italy, his meeting with Boileau,

his return via Germany and Holland to England in 1702. "The letter from Italy to Halifax," in rhymed couplets, and his poem "The Campaign," in the same measure, read to us now like fine literary exercises, compared with the prose of his essays. But "The Campaign" was the making of Addison. Godolphin, the Whig premier, had strong political reasons for making the most of Marlborough's great victory at Blenheim in August 1704. He sought out Addison, who was then, it is said, living obscurely in a garret at the top of three flights of stairs in the Haymarket. The poem is no longer read, but its famous simile of Marlborough and the angel will always be quoted:

> So when an angel at divine command,
> With rising tempests shakes a guilty land
> (Such as of late o'er pale Britannia passed),
> Calm and serene he drives the furious blast;
> And, pleased the Almighty's orders to perform,
> Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.

The poem fulfilled all Godolphin's wishes, and Addison was rewarded with an Under-Secretaryship of State, the first of a number of offices of profit which he honourably if not too competently filled. He had no hand in the design or first publication of the *Tatler*, and, indeed, was in Ireland at the time as Secretary to the Earl of Wharton, Lord Lieutenant, but he soon recognised Steele's hand, and his proffered help as a contributor was wisely and warmly accepted.

The *Tatler* appeared on April 12, 1709. Wishing to be anonymous, Steele adopted the name of Isaac Bickerstaff, borrowed from Swift, who had taken it from a shop-door in Long Acre and used it as a cloak under which to attack John Partridge, a notorious advertising astrologer and almanac maker. Although the *Tatler* underwent considerable change after Addison began to write for it, Steele launched it in the right way. He linked it to the coffee-houses, of which there were no fewer than three thousand in London. They were the centres of news gossip and discussion. He announced in his first number:

> All accounts of gallantry, pleasures, and entertainment shall be under article of White's Chocolate-house; poetry under that of Will's Coffee-

house; learning under the title of the Grecian; foreign and domestic news you will have from St. James's Coffee-house; and what else I have to offer on any other subject shall be dated from my own apartment.

White's Coffee-house, the parent of White's Club, and the St. James's Coffee-house were in St. James's Street; Will's, where Dryden, in his winter chair by the fire or his summer seat on the balcony, had dictated the laws of criticism and taste in poetry to his worshippers, was in Russell Street; and the "Grecian," the oldest of all the coffee-houses, was in Devereux Court, Essex Street. In these places Steele collected news and topics; in places the *Tatler* was itself discussed. Its success was immediate. Steele made an appeal at the outset to women by declaring that his title was chosen in their honour. The paper appeared three times a week on the post days, which were Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. The first four numbers were given away gratis, and then the price of one penny was charged. The motto adopted was Juvenal's "Quicquid agunt homines," etc., freely translated:

> Whate'er men do, or say, or think, or dream,
> Our motley paper seizes for its theme.

Some of Addison's most delightful essays appear in the *Tatler*, but Steele stamped its character on the work as a censor of manners and morals, a corrector of the public taste, and exponent of everyday London topics. His aim was, as he said, "to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behaviour."

All these elements in the *Tatler* combined to prepare the way for the more finished but not more vivid art of the *Spectator*, with Sir Roger de Coverley, like a full-length portrait by Gainsborough, for the master of those humours and ceremonies.

Isaac Bickerstaff had unluckily meddled in politics in the earlier career of the *Tatler*, as we know by Swift and his "Letters to Stella"; and Steele lost his post as Gazetteer owing to that fact. This, too, helped to bring the journal to its rather sudden end; and it was probably on Addison's

more prudent counsel that it was decided to begin a new organ entirely without politics.

On January 2, 1711, appeared the last *Tatler*. At the beginning of March following appeared the first of the *Spectator*.

The *Spectator* was at first a penny paper, issued daily; but in 1712, when the stamp duty killed off several papers, the price was raised to twopence. Steele and Addison's collaborative journal ran to 555 numbers; the later numbers, to 635, were an attempt to revive it without Steele, and an unsuccessful one. Addison's picturesque statement of his aims is worth quoting. In an early number he wrote: "It was said of Socrates that he brought philosophy down from heaven to inhabit among men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me that I have brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools, colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses."

"It is not strange," says Macaulay, "that the success of the *Spectator* should have been such as no similar work has ever obtained. The number of copies daily distributed was at first three thousand. It subsequently increased, and had risen to near four thousand when the stamp tax was imposed. The *Spectator*, however, stood its ground, and though its circulation fell off, still yielded a large revenue both to the State and to the authors. For particular papers, the demand was immense; of some, it is said, twenty thousand copies were required. But this was not all. To have the *Spectator* served up every morning with the bohea and the rolls was a luxury for the few. The majority were content to wait till essays enough had appeared to form a volume. Ten thousand copies of each volume were immediately taken off, and new editions were called for. It must be remembered, that the population of England was then hardly a third of what it now is" (in 1845). "There was doubtless more than one knight of the shire whose country seat did not contain ten books, receipt books and books on farriery included. In these circumstances, the sale of the *Spectator* must be considered as indicating a popularity quite as great as that of the most successful works of Sir Walter Scott and Mr. Dickens of our time."

By their genius, Steele and Addison made of the essay a perfectly responsive form of literature, in direct touch with life. In the "Sir Roger de Coverley" series they worked their richest vein of the human comedy; it is one of the charms of the essay, as they wrote it, that it is able to touch so many of the other literary forms without losing its own individual quality. And for their style, which is

carried to a degree of colloquial perfection, it may be described as "a talking mode" of writing, almost as easy in apparent effect as speech itself.

To illustrate the two essayists' separate and joint faculty let us take an instance of the "Isaac Bickerstaff" papers in the *Tatler*, which deals with London coffee-house "talkers and story-tellers" and then a Sir Roger de Coverley essay. The *Tatler* essay is No. 264, dated as Bickerstaff's custom was "from my own Apartment, December 15" (1710):

It was said of two ancient authors, who had very different beauties in their style, "that if you took a word from one of them, you only spoiled his eloquence; but if you took a word from the other, you spoiled his sense." I have often applied the first part of this criticism to several of these coffee-house speakers whom I have at present in my thoughts, though the character that is given to the last of those authors is what I would recommend to the imitation of my loving countrymen. But it is not only public places of resort, but private clubs and conversations over a bottle, that are infested with this loquacious kind of animal, especially that species which I comprehend under the name of a story-teller. I would earnestly desire these gentlemen to consider, that no point of wit or mirth at the end of a story can atone for the half hour that has been lost before they come at it. I would likewise lay it home to their serious consideration, whether they think that every man in the company has not a right to speak as well as themselves? and whether they do not think they are invading another man's property, when they engross the time which should be divided equally among the company to their own private use?

This goes to illustrate the talking habit in the London coffee-houses, which is so nearly related to the colloquial art of the periodical essay.

As for Sir Roger de Coverley, he was a joint creation. Steele first struck out the portrait in an admirable pastiche; Addison went on and elaborated the knight's adventures and London humours. The whole is an inimitable personal study; a comedy in narrative, a story in essay-form, which is a classic in the world literature. This is Steele's first sketch in his account of the *Spectator* Club:

The first of our Society is a Gentleman from *Worcestershire*, of antient Descent, a Baronet, His Name Sir Roger de Coverley. His great Grandfather was Inventor of that famous Country-Dance which is call'd after him. All who know that Shire are very well acquainted with the Parts and Merits of Sir Roger. He is a Gentleman that is very singular in his Behaviour, but his Singularities proceed from his good sense, and are

Contradictions to the Manners of the World, only as he thinks the World is in the wrong. However, this Humour creates him no Enemies, for he does nothing with Sourness or Obstinacy; and his being unconfined to Modes and Forms, makes him but the readier and the more capable to please and oblige all who know him. When he is in town he lives in *Sobo-Square*: it is said, he keeps himself a Batchelor by reason he was crossed in Love, by a perverse beautiful Widow of the next County to him.

Before this disappointment Sir Roger was what you call a fine Gentleman, had often supped with my Lord *Rochester* and Sir *George Etherege*, fought a Duel upon his first coming to Town, and Kick'd Bully *Dawson* in a publick Coffee-house for calling him Youngster. But being ill-used by the above-mentioned Widow, he was very serious for a Year and a half; and though, his temper being naturally jovial, he at last got over it, he grew careless of himself, and never dressed afterwards; he continues to wear a Coat and Doublet of the same Cut that were in fashion at the Time of his Repulse, which, in his merry Humours, he tells us, has been in and out twelve Times since he first wore it. He is now in his Fifty sixth Year, cheerful, gay and hearty, keeps a good House both in Town and Country; a great Lover of Mankind; but there is such a mirthful Cast in his behaviour, that he is rather beloved than esteemed: his Tenants grow rich, his Servants look satisfied, all the young Women profess Love to him, and the young Men are glad of his Company: when he comes into a House he calls the Servants by their Names, and talks all the way up Stairs to a Visit. I must not omit that Sir Roger is a Justice of the *Ouorum*; that he fills the chair at a Quarter-Session with great Abilities, and three Months ago gain'd universal Applause by explaining a Passage in the Game-Act.

The next is Addison's account of Sir Roger's visit to the Abbey, with a vivid London prelude, which together make what is perhaps the most famous single essay in English literature:

As we went up the body of the church, the knight pointed at the trophies upon one of the monuments, and cried out: "A brave man, I warrant him!" Passing afterwards by Sir Cloudesley Shovel, he flung his head that way, and cried: "Sir Cloudesley Shovel! A very gallant man!" As we stood before Busby's tomb, the knight uttered himself again after the same manner: "Dr. Busby! a great man! he whipped my grandfather; a very great man! I should have gone to him myself, if I had not been a blockhead; a very great man!"

We were immediately conducted into the little chapel on the right hand. Sir Roger, planting himself at our historian's elbow, was very attentive to everything he said, particularly to the account he gave us of the lord who had cut off the king of Morocco's head. Among several other figures, he was very well pleased to see the statesman Cecil upon his knees; and concluding them all to be great men, was conducted to the figure which represents that martyr to good housewifery who died by the prick of a needle. Upon our interpreter's telling us that she was a maid of honour to Queen Elizabeth, the knight was very inquisitive into the

name and family; and after having regarded her finger for some time, "I wonder," says he, "that Sir Richard Baker has said nothing of her in his Chronicle."

We were then conveyed to the two coronation chairs, where my old friend, after having heard that the stone underneath, the most ancient of them, which was brought from Scotland, was called Jacob's pillar, sat himself down in the chair; and looking like the figure of an old Gothic king, asked our interpreter, "what authority they had to say that Jacob had ever been in Scotland"? The fellow, instead of returning him an answer, told him "that he hoped his honour would pay his forfeit." I could observe Sir Roger a little ruffled upon being thus trepanned; but our guide not insisting upon his demand, the knight soon recovered his good-humour, and whispered in my ear "if Will Wimble were with us, and saw those two chairs, it would go hard but he would get a tobacco-stopper out of one or t'other of them."

Sir Roger, in the next place, laid his hand upon Edward III's sword, and leaning upon the pommel of it, gave us the whole history of the Black Prince; concluding, that in Richard Baker's opinion, Edward III was one of the greatest princes that ever sat upon the English throne.

We were then shewn Edward the Confessor's tomb; upon which Sir Roger acquainted us, that "he was the first who touched for the evil": and afterwards Henry IV's; upon which he shook his head, and told us "there was fine reading in the casualities of that reign."

Our conductor then pointed to that monument where there is a figure of one of our English kings without a head; and upon giving us to know that the head, which was of beaten silver, had been stolen away several years since; "Some Whig, I'll warrant," says Sir Roger: "you ought to lock up your kings better; they will carry off the body too, if you do not take care."

The glorious names of Henry V and Queen Elizabeth gave the knight great opportunities of shining, and of doing justice to Sir Richard Baker, "who," as our knight observed with some surprise, "had a great many kings in him whose monuments he had not seen in the abbey."

For my own part, I could not but be pleased to see the knight shew such an honest passion for the glory of his country, and such a respectful gratitude to the memory of its princes.

I must not omit, that the benevolence of my good old friend, which flows out towards every one he converses with, made him very kind to our interpreter, whom he looked upon as an extraordinary man; for which reason he shook him by the hand at parting, telling him that he should be very glad to see him at his lodgings in Norfolk Buildings, and talk over these matters with him more at leisure.

Of the later years of Steele and Addison it is unnecessary to say much. The *Spectator* was followed by the *Guardian*, to which Steele was the principal contributor, Addison writing about fifty of its papers. Both essayists passed to a great extent from literature to politics, Addison again becoming Chief Secretary for Ireland and Steele entering

Parliament. Unfortunately their friendship did not survive in these changes, and the painful rupture which occurred between them in 1718 was not healed. Addison, indeed, died in the following year, after three years of unhappiness with Sarah, Countess of Warwick, with whom he had made a showy but most unsuitable marriage. He died at Holland House, June 17, 1719, at the early age of forty-seven. He is said to have sent the message to the young Earl of Warwick, whose tutor he had been: "Come and see in what peace a Christian can die." His body was buried at midnight in Westminster Abbey. Few nobler tributes have been written than those in which his old friend Thomas Tickell described the scene of his burial in the Abbey:

> Can I forget the dismal night that gave
> My soul's best part for ever to the grave?
> How silent did his old companions tread,
> By midnight lamps, the mansions of the dead,
> Through breathing statues, then unheeded things,
> Through rows of warriors, and through walks of kings!
> What awe did the slow solemn knell inspire;
> The pealing organ, and the pausing choir;
> The duties by the lawn-robed prelate paid:
> And the last words, that dust to dust conveyed!
> While speechless o'er thy closing grave we bend,
> Accept these tears, thou dear departed friend.
> Oh, gone for ever! take this long adieu;
> And sleep in peace next thy loved Montague.

Steele survived his old friend ten years—years saddened by the loss of his wife, his "dear Prue," to whom he wrote letters full of tender gallantry. He died far from London, at Carmarthen, September 1, 1729.

## § 3

### JONATHAN SWIFT

The name of Jonathan Swift is one of the very greatest names in English literature, and the *Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels* the greatest satires in the English language.

Swift, though called "the great Irish patriot," was Irish only in the sense of having been born in Dublin of English parents. He was educated at Kilkenny, the best

school in Ireland, where he had Congreve for a schoolfellow, and at Trinity College, Dublin, where he was "stopped of his degree for dullness and insufficiency," obtaining it finally as an act of special grace. He became the amanuensis of his mother's relative, the rich and urbane Sir William Temple, and resided for a term of years as a dependent at Moor Park, where he saw Esther Johnson (Stella) grow up from a delicate child of eight into "one of the most beautiful, graceful, and agreeable young women in London—her hair was blacker than a raven, and every feature of her face in perfection." At Temple's death he was already famous as a writer, having written *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books*. He was eventually recognised as the greatest of pamphleteers, and as a reward he obtained the Deanery of St. Patrick's in Dublin, a piece of preferment which he regarded as the stepping-stone to far better things. But with the death of Queen Anne the party he served was not so much ruined as annihilated; and, retiring to Dublin, he threw in his lot with the Irish, the *Drapier's Letters* being the most splendid proofs of his whole-hearted patriotism. We see him in his fighting prime as a tall powerful man with a large unemotional face, in which flashed eyes of a wondrous azure that could look lightning. He died "from the top," as he foretold, being harassed all his life by a labyrinthine vertigo, and falling into mental decay he gradually lost his faculties. He left his fortune to found a lunatic asylum in Dublin:

> And showed by one satiric touch
> No nation needed it so much.

He was not a comfortable companion, except to the high-placed personages whom he courted with an obsequiousness occasionally touched with insolence—for it was the place, not the man, he cultivated. At best, among his equals or inferiors, he was exacting, masterful; at worst, he was a brutal bully. Faulkner, his Dublin publisher, years after the Dean's death was dining with some friends, who chaffed him for his odd way of eating asparagus. They laughed at him when he confessed that the Dean had told him it was the right way. Whereupon Faulkner, with a touch of choler, exclaimed: "I tell you what it is, gentlemen; if

you had ever dined with the Dean, you would have eaten your asparagus as he bade you." He had in him not a trace of courtesy which springs from the heart, and must be defined as formal kindliness. He loved to humiliate those who, for this reason or that, were debarred from hitting back or were afraid to do so. Dining at a certain house, where the part of the tablecloth next to him happened to have a small hole in it, he tore the hole as wide as he could, and ate his soup through it; his reason for such behaviour being, as he said, to mortify the lady of the house and teach her to pay a proper attention to housewifery.

A loathly man—yet lovable, and beloved by one of the most delightful women in all literary history—the Stella who moves Thackeray to a sudden rapture: "Fair and tender creature! Pure and affectionate heart. . . . Gentle lady! So lonely, so loving, so unhappy . . . you are one of the saints of English story." Whether or not he married this lady will never be known; probably he did not, as his ruthless rejection of Vanessa, who wished to compel a marriage, proves that he was not a marrying man. There is some mystery and misery in Swift's life which we shall never succeed in elucidating. That is why he remains one of the most piteous and perplexing personalities in the history of English literature. His bodily sufferings which ended in five terrible years of madness had doubtless something to do with the character of his literary works.

His hatred of mankind seems sincere enough; a burning indignation, more vehement than Juvenal's, consumes his vitals as he rages at the littlenesses, the treachery, and mean injustice of his fellow-animals. And, to add insult to injury, he thrusts at mankind's armour of hypocrisy and self-esteem. In the terrible pages of *Gulliver's Travels* he has packed all his venom, all his rage and woe. And what a strange vengeance posterity has taken on the most vindictive of satirists. His gospel of hatred has become a book for the young and innocent, and has been eagerly read by generations of children. "After all it is a kind place, this planet," observes Mr. Birrell, commenting on this signal act of poetic justice; "the best use we have for our cynics is to let them amuse the junior portion of our population."

The problem of Swift's relations with Stella is one of the most fascinating in the history of literature. The portions of his letters to her, which impart news or views or both, are written in a delightful gossiping style. Sometimes he makes little rhymes that have the air of being proverbs, such as :

> Be you lords or be you earls,
> You must write to naughty girls.

Swift's letters seem to show that love for a charming child had grown into the tender adoration of a beautiful, wise, and witty woman. This at least is certain—he loved her tenderly and truly, she was his one earthly joy. And the very fact that we can never understand the nature of their intimacy is on the whole a thing to be glad of—for it shows that Swift had the moon's mysteriousness in that he had one face for the world and another, not to be seen save by her, for the woman he loved.

It is not so easy to avoid condemnation of the man in examining his affair with Vanessa (Esther Vanhomrigh), who fell passionately in love with him. He tells the first part of the story himself in a charming poem entitled " Cadenus and Vanessa," which was not written for publication. This poem ends with the heroine's promise to teach her world-weary and elderly counsellor the art of love, and there is the shadow of a promise in the final couplet :

> But what success Vanessa met
> Is to the world a secret yet.

In the end he had to choose between Stella and Vanessa, and his dismissal of the latter, though all the circumstances are not clear, strikes us as brutally abrupt.

He was a poet of power (despite Dryden's prophecy of failure), managing his octosyllabic line with the dexterity of a player at quarter-staff. But he is one of the very first masters of that English prose which is pithy rather than *pittoresque* and, based on a straightforward simplicity, lends at times to words and phrases the mass and momentum of things and actions. In style his prose is beyond criticism ; in its matter it is the man in himself with all his odious faults, all the splendour of his genius, all his flashes of loving-



*Photo: B. P. C.*

"SWIFT AND STELLA," BY MARGARET ISABEL DICKSEE.

Dean Swift, the author of *Gulliver's Travels*, first met Stella while he was living with Sir William Temple, and she was quite a child. She afterwards became a great and tragic figure in the drama of his life.

kindness. Mr. George Saintsbury says: "If intellectual genius and literary art be taken together, no prose-writer, who is a prose-writer mainly, is Swift's superior, and a man might be hard put to it to say who among such writers in the plainer English can be pronounced his equal."

A brief discussion of his verse may fittingly begin with a quotation from his lines "On the Death of Dr. Swift," neatly defined by Mr. Gosse as a maxim of La Rochefoucauld expanded in five hundred lines, full of the bitter-sweet irony of the writer in his milder moods:

> My female friends, whose tender hearts
> Have better learn'd to act their parts,
> Receive the news in doleful dumps:
> "The Dean is dead: (Pray what is trumps?)
> Then, Lord have mercy on his soul!
> (Ladies, I'll venture for the vole.)
> Six Deans, they say, must bear the pall:
> (I wish I knew what king to call.)
> Madam, your husband will attend
> The funeral of so good a friend?
> No, madam, 'tis a shocking sight:
> And he's engaged to-morrow night:
> My Lady Club will take it ill,
> If he should fail her at quadrille.
> He loved the Dean—(I lead a heart)
> But dearest friends, they say, must part.
> His time was come: he ran his race;
> We hope he's in a better place."

He could make a phrase with a thorn to it, and define a character in a line (as when he defines a fop as "stock'd with the latest gibberish of the town"), but his verse lacks the memorableness of Dryden's and Pope's. His poetry is not often quoted, and his very Hudibrastic lines upon petty critics are probably the most familiar:

> The vermin only tease and pinch
> Their foes superior by an inch;
> So, naturalists observe a flea
> Has smaller fleas that on him prey,
> And these have smaller still to bite 'em,
> And so proceed *ad infinitum*.

Swift, however, would be forgotten to-day except by

professors and professional critics, but for his prose satires. From the literary point of view his *Tale of a Tub* is the best of all; at the dismal ending of his life Swift is said to have exclaimed: "Good God, what a genius I was when I wrote that book!" The title originated in the rumoured custom of throwing a tub to whales to play with to prevent them jostling a ship. After a whimsical dedication to "Prince Posterity," we have a dissertation on oratorical machines, and another on the humours of Grub Street—after which the serious matter begins, and we are introduced to the father who dies and leaves legacies to his three sons, Peter (Church of Rome), Martin (Church of England), and Jack (Dissent).

His lesser works all show the satirical sparkle—sometimes bursting into a scorching flame of furious indignation—which was a new thing in English prose. It was as though he had continued the verse epigrams of Dryden, say with the latter's fluent easy prose in an absolutely novel form of composition.

But his fame in these latter days rests on *Gulliver's Travels*, which is a continuation of the Utopian idea with that of imaginary journeys burlesquing the old travellers' tales. Manifestly the book, even in its bowdlerised form, is a satire, and a ruthless one at that. Swift is not content, however, with making a fable or allegory; he develops the phases of Gulliver's story with the skill of Mr. H. G. Wells, say, as shown in his scientific fantasies, and uses every artifice —*e.g.* the details of Gulliver's career, the maps, and so forth —to create an illusion of reality in the reader's mind. That is why children, though they cannot grasp the satirical intention, read *Gulliver's Travels* with delight as a story of wonderful, yet credible events and experiences. Each section of the book displays the pettiness of mankind from a different angle.

In the "Voyage to Lilliput" we are shown ourselves as pigmies through the wrong end of a telescope, as it were. Our affairs, reduced to a miniature, seem diminutive and ridiculous—as a very small man does in the eyes of men of average dimensions. As Hazlitt points out, Gulliver's carrying off of the whole fleet of Blefuscu is "a mortifying stroke, aimed at national glory"—for the pomp and circum-



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A SCENE FROM *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS.*

From a painting by Willy Pogány.

" I walked with the utmost circumspection, to avoid treading on any stragglers."

stance of naval warfare are reduced to toyshop scale and so made mirth-provoking.

Lying down behind a hillock, I took out my small perspective glass, and viewed the enemy's fleet at anchor, consisting of about fifty men-of-war, and a great number of transports: I then came back to my house, and gave order (for which I had a warrant) for a great quantity of the strongest cable and bars of iron. The cable was about as thick as packthread, and the bars of the length and size of a knitting needle. I trebled the cable to make it stronger, and, for the same reason, I twisted three of the iron bars together, binding the extremities into a hook. Having thus fixed fifty hooks to as many cables, I went back to the north-east coast, and putting off my coat, shoes, and stockings, walked into the sea. . . .

The enemy was so frightened when they saw me, that they leaped out of their ships, and swam to shore, where there could not be fewer than thirty thousand souls. I then took my tackling, and, fastening a hook to the hole at the prow of each, I tied all the cords together at the end. While I was thus employed, the enemy discharged several thousand arrows, many of which stuck in my hands and face, and, besides the excessive smart, gave me much disturbance in my work. . . . I went on boldly in spite of the enemy's arrows, many of which struck against the glasses of my spectacles, but without any other effect, farther than a little to discompose them. I had now fastened all the hooks, and, taking the knot in my hand, began to pull, but not a ship would stir, for they were all too fast held by their anchors, so that the boldest part of my enterprise remained. I therefore let go the cord, and leaving the hooks fixed to the ships, I resolutely cut with my knife the cables that fastened the anchors, receiving above two hundred shots in my face and hands; then I took up the knotted end of the cables to which my hooks were tied, and with great ease drew fifty of the enemy's largest men-of-war after me.

In Brobdingnag we look through the other end of the telescope. Gulliver is among giants who show a gigantic magnanimity, which contrasts with the pettiness of human beings.

It is almost impossible to open Swift's writings at any page without lighting upon some passage which has become a household word. Such, for instance, as the following:

And he gave it for his opinion, that whoever could make two ears of corn, or two blades of grass, to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together.

He had been eight years upon a project for extracting sunbeams out of cucumbers, which were to be put in phials hermetically sealed, and let out to warm the air in raw inclement summers.

The reason why so few marriages are happy is because young ladies spend their time in making nets, not in making cages.

Swift is both a glory and a disgrace of world-literature. In his books, in his life, he exposes to the mind's eye the lowest deeps and the loftiest heights of which the mutable spirit of man is capable. In him Reason, as the eighteenth century understood it, committed suicide.

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# XVIII

# THE RISE OF THE NOVEL

## § 1

### DEFOE

DANIEL DEFOE, the virtual founder of the British novel, was born in Fore Street in the City of London in 1659. His father was a butcher, and when he was a boy John Milton was one of his neighbours. The elder Defoe was a pious Dissenter and his enterprise was to make his son a preacher. Daniel was well educated, and after he had determined not to be a minister he set up for himself in business as an exporter of stockings in Freeman's Yard, Cornhill. It is impossible here to summarise all the incidents of a crowded life, all the ups and downs of an infinitely varied and generally troubled career. Defoe was writing almost to the day of his death, and he died a broken old man in lodgings off Moorfields in 1730. He was buried in the same graveyard as Bunyan and Isaac Watts the hymn-writer.

The world remembers Defoe with gratitude as the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, and has forgotten most of the rest of his voluminous writing. He was, indeed, the author of two hundred and fifty books! He wrote other novels besides *Robinson Crusoe*, of which the most interesting to-day are *Captain Jack*, *Moll Flanders*, and *Roxana*. They abound in intimate descriptions of London's common life in that period. He wrote history and biography, books of travel and poems, treatises on the complete gentleman and the complete tradesman, manuals of conduct for parents and lovers, political pamphlets and satires. At one time in his life he wrote a newspaper with his own hand three times a week. He earned a great deal of money and



*Photo: Kirchgitz Collection.*

"DEFOE IN THE PILLORY," BY EYRE CROWE.

Defoe, who was among many other things a political journalist, was pilloried for writing, his *Shortest Way with Dissenters.*

lost it, and most of his life was spent in a very sea of trouble.

Defoe was a man of amazing energy and originality. He was a Whig, honestly interested in supporting the Union of Scotland, in preserving the Protestant succession to the throne, and in the repeal of the laws that penalised Dissenters. He was certainly not over-scrupulous. At one time he secured an engagement on the staff of Tory papers in order to take out the sting of attacks on the Whigs. But he did not live in a scrupulous age. Perhaps the most ironic incident in a career composed of irony was his writing of a burlesque attack on the Hanoverian succession, which was read seriously by dull people and landed its author in prison. It is interesting to recall that so fertile was Defoe's mind that among many modern enterprises foreshadowed in his works are a government register for sailors, agricultural credit banks, and national poor relief.

§ 2

Defoe was nearly sixty when *Robinson Crusoe* was published The idea was of course taken from the story of the four solitary months that Alexander Selkirk spent on the island of Juan Fernandez in 1704. The character of Crusoe was to some extent the character of his creator—in his industry, his refusal to be beaten, his courage, and his faith in God. *Robinson Crusoe* is a novel of "human contrivance and homely wisdom." There is no humour in it, no pathos, and no mystery. It is a simple story written for simple people by a great master of narrative and description, and the book has an additional interest for the workaday world because of its author's Kiplingesque knowledge of the technicalities of half a dozen trades. Incredible as it may seem, Defoe had great difficulty in finding a publisher. He showed *Robinson Crusoe* to the booksellers of Lombard Street, the Strand, Westminster, and Little Britain in vain. But William Taylor, of the Ship, in Paternoster Row, who was young enough to be Defoe's son, saw his chance and seized it. Between April, when it appeared, and August four editions were called for,

and even a hostile critic had to admit that it was "famed from Tuttle Street to Limehouse Hole," and that "every old woman leaves it as a legacy with *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Practice of Piety*, and *God's Revenge Against Murther*, to her posterity." The charm of the story really lies not in adventure, but in its picture of a man forced to live the simple life, to build, to bake, to contrive, and to preserve his cheerfulness and piety. Dickens remarked that in all its pages there is nothing to make a man laugh or cry; and this is about true. Yet *Robinson Crusoe* stands alone; it has been translated into countless languages, and has been read even by Arabs in the desert.

The importance of *Robinson Crusoe* in literary history is that it is fiction deliberately intended to pass as fact. Charles Lamb said of Defoe's stories: "It is impossible to believe, while you are reading them, that a real person is not narrating to you everywhere nothing but what really happened to himself." And Lamb adds that Defoe's success was largely due to "the extreme homeliness of his style." He was a realist to the extent of making his characters speak as such people speak in real life, and, as most of his characters belong to the class of the unlettered, we have in Defoe, as both Coleridge and Lamb have pointed out, "infinite repetition and an overacted exactness" which merely add to the realism. Defoe's greatest triumph in "inventing truth" is his *Journal of the Plague Year*, absolutely fiction, accepted as fact when it was published, and since often quoted by trustful historians as a record of actual events. Defoe had been only five years old in the year of the Plague.

*Robinson Crusoe* may be properly regarded as an early attempt at realistic fiction, and in his *Memoirs of a Cavalier* Defoe invented the form of the historical novel, in which real and imaginary persons are both introduced, the method of Walter Scott and Alexandre Dumas. In all, Defoe wrote six novels, three of them picaresque stories of crime—in each case with well-emphasised morals, the tediousness of which does not take away from the interest in the stories as vivid pictures of English life in the reign of Queen Anne.

## § 3

### SAMUEL RICHARDSON

Despite the success of the French novelists of the early eighteenth century, and we may mention Le Sage, the author of *Gil Blas*, and the Abbé Prévost, author of *Manon Lescaut*; despite Defoe and the earlier English experiments in fiction, the English novel, as we know it, was not created until Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, was published in 1740. Novel-reading has often been denounced by moralists, and it is, therefore, interesting to note that *Pamela*, "in every strict sense the earliest English novel," was written to inculcate morality and to protect the inexperienced. Richardson was a moralist above all other things. Johnson said that he taught "the passions to move at the command of virtue."

Samuel Richardson was born in Derbyshire in 1689. Very little is known about his boyhood, though he has told us that when he was eleven he took on himself to write an admonitory letter, full of Scriptural texts, to a backbiting widow of fifty, and that when he was thirteen he wrote love-letters for a number of young women who were acquaintances of his family. When he was seventeen he was apprenticed to a printer in Aldersgate Street, and in 1719 he began business for himself in a court off Fleet Street. Two years later he completed his resemblance to Hogarth's industrious apprentice by marrying his old master's daughter. Richardson was fifty years old when he first began to write *Pamela*. The heroine, a simple, innocent country girl, led astray by her dissolute master, conquers in the end, and is rewarded by becoming his wife. *Pamela* was followed by *Clarissa, or the Adventures of a Young Lady*, in 1748, and by the *History of Sir Charles Grandison* in 1753 and 1754. Richardson was an eighteenth-century middle-class cockney, sharing all the prejudices and limitations of his class. To quote Leslie Stephen: "He looked upon freethinkers with such horror that he will not allow even his worst villains to be religious sceptics; he shares the profound reverence of the shopkeepers for the upper classes who are his customers, and he rewards virtue

with a coach and six. And yet this mild little man, with the very narrowest intellectual limitations, writes a book which makes a mark not only in England but in Europe, and is imitated by Rousseau in the book which set more than one generation weeping; *Clarissa*, moreover, was accepted as the masterpiece of its kind, and she moved not only Englishmen but Germans and Frenchmen to sympathetic tears."

Richardson told his stories by means of letters, and in this way he was able to reveal much more of the minds of his characters than can be revealed by the autobiographical method of *Robinson Crusoe*.

Judged from the modern point of view, Richardson is a tiresome mawkish sentimentalist. Leslie Stephen complains that he rubs the noses of his readers in the agony of his heroines, "squeezing the last drop of bitterness out of every incident." But it must be remembered that Richardson wrote for his own time and particularly for the women of his own time, and apart from their importance in literary history, Richardson's novels played a considerable part in the development of the democratic idea. It was a novel idea in the eighteenth century that a servant girl simply became a heroine of romance. From every point of view *Clarissa* is Richardson's most important novel. Austin Dobson has admirably summarised its plot:

> Entangled henceforth in an inextricable network of lies, intrigue and deception, the poor girl, alienated from her friends, and unsuspecting in her own goodness and purity, is decoyed into the company of some of the most worthless of her sex and finally betrayed while under the influence of opiates. After various experiences in a spunging-house, and different hiding-places, she finally settles down, broken-hearted, to die. Her relations reject her; and though Lovelace, in his intermittent moments of remorse, is willing to marry her, her pride and inherent nobility of character, make such a solution out of the question. Serene in the consciousness of her innocence, "unviolated (as she says) in her will," but mortally wounded, Clarissa gradually fades away, and finally dies, leaving her suddenly awakened relatives distracted by remorse for her fate, while Lovelace, who has richly deserved the gallows, is compassionately killed in a duel by her cousin and guardian, Colonel William Morden.

Both *Pamela* and *Clarissa* were translated into French by the Abbé Prévost, and Richardson's novels had an enormous contemporary vogue on the Continent. Diderot,

the great eighteenth-century French philosopher, considered him the equal of Moses, Homer, Euripides, and Sophocles. He was warmly admired by Mme. de Staël and by Rousseau, whose *La Nouvelle Héloïse* was modelled on *Clarissa*, and years afterwards Alfred de Musset, the French poet, declared that *Clarissa* was the greatest novel in the world. There is an amusing story of Madame de Staël, a super-sentimentalist, journeying all the way from Paris to London to weep on Richardson's tomb. She stopped at the Golden Cross Hotel and was found, the next morning, weeping bitter tears in St. Bride's churchyard in Fleet Street on the tomb of the wrong Richardson, a worthy but unliterary butcher.

## § 4

### HENRY FIELDING

If Richardson invented the English novel, Henry Fielding, the Hogarth of Literature, gave it, for the first time, absolute literary distinction. When he began to write, Fielding had already acquired a comprehensive knowledge of the life of his time. He had come into personal contact with all sorts and conditions of men. Fielding was not only a great writer, he was, in all essentials, a typical Englishman, as Leslie Stephen has written, "the big, full-blooded, vigorous mass of roast beef who will stand no nonsense, and whose contempt for the fanciful and arbitrary tends towards the coarse and materialistic."

Henry Fielding was born in 1707 near Glastonbury in Somerset. He was educated at Eton and came to London in 1727, among other things, for the first time making the acquaintance of his famous second cousin, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. For some years Fielding gained a more or less precarious livelihood by writing plays. His mother was dead, his father had married again, his allowance from home was small and intermittent, and, as he himself said, he had to choose between being a hackney coachman or a hackney writer. He married in 1734, but this did not much modify his Bohemian life. He was called to the Bar when he was thirty-three and joined the Western Circuit. His first novel, *Joseph Andrews*, was published in 1742, for which

he received from his publisher the sum of £83 11*s*. It was intended as a burlesque of Richardson's *Pamela*, and Fielding set out to ridicule Richardson by transferring Pamela's embarrassments to her brother. The story is remarkable for the famous character of Parson Adams, the lovable country curate, as distinguished for his poverty as his learning; his ignorance of the world, his zeal and virtuous simplicity, his absence of mind, his oddities and little predicaments, excite the mirth and win the love and esteem of every reader of *Joseph Andrews*. Goldsmith copied the character of Parson Adams when he wrote *The Vicar of Wakefield*.

In 1743 he published the *History of the Late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great*, an ironic biography of the notorious thief-taker, illustrating, as Austin Dobson neatly says, "the general proposition that greatness without goodness is no better than badness." *Tom Jones, or the History of a Foundling*, was published in 1749, Fielding being paid £700 by his publisher. *Amelia* was published in 1751, the author receiving £1000. In 1748 Fielding was appointed a Justice of the Peace for Middlesex and Westminster, an office which gave him £300 a year and a house in Bow Street. Despite constant ill-health he was assiduous in his legal duties, writing valuable pamphlets and striving hard to deal with the insistent roguery of eighteenth-century London, so vividly portrayed in his own *Jonathan Wild* and in his friend Hogarth's drawings. In 1754 he became so desperately ill that he resigned his office and left London for Lisbon, suffering horrible discomforts on the journey. The story of the voyage is told in the pamphlet *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*, published after its author's death. Fielding reached Lisbon in August 1754. He died there two months later, and was buried in the English cemetery.

Richardson wrote for women. Fielding wrote for men. Richardson was a super-sentimentalist, Fielding was a realist. The two writers were antipathetic. In his famous eulogy of Fielding's "athletic and boisterous genius," Thackeray says: "He couldn't do otherwise than laugh at the puny, cockney bookseller, pouring out endless volumes of sentimental twaddle, and hold him up to scorn as a moll-coddle and a milksop. *His* genius had been nursed on sack-posset, and not on dishes of tea. *His* muse had sung the

loudest in tavern choruses, had seen the daylight streaming in over thousands of emptied bowls, and reeled home to chambers on the shoulders of the watchman. Richardson's goddess was attended by old maids and dowagers, and fed on muffins and bohea."

Critical opinion has acclaimed Fielding's genius. Hazlitt said: "As a painter of real life he was equal to Hogarth; as a mere observer of human nature, he was little inferior to Shakespeare." Gibbon, the great historian, a man not given to fulsome eulogy, declared: "The successors of Charles V may disdain their brethren of England: but the romance of *Tom Jones*, that exquisite picture of human manners, will outlive the palace of the Escurial and the Imperial Eagle of Austria." It has. The Escurial was partly destroyed by fire in 1872. The Imperial Eagle of Austria was cast into the dust in 1918. And the world still reads *Tom Jones*. Gibbon was a true prophet, and as Thackeray said: "To have your name mentioned by Gibbon is like having it written on the dome of St. Peter's. Pilgrims from all the world admire and behold it."

*Tom Jones* is without question Fielding's masterpiece, and it remains one of the half-dozen greatest novels in the English language. It does not contain so lovable a creation as Parson Adams in *Joseph Andrews*, but it bristles with clearly defined characters as human and as good to know as the characters created by Dickens himself. Allworthy, that compound of coldness and excellence; the younger Blifil, the hypocrite; Squire Western, the boisterous, brutal, jovial Jacobite country gentleman of the Georgian era; Parson Thwackum, the bigot; the immortal Partridge, of ignorance and vanity complete; Lady Bellaston, the fashionable sensualist, who, as Austin Dobson has suggested, might well have been drawn by Balzac; Sophia Western herself, "the first unsentimentalised flesh and blood heroine." The hero, Tom Jones, is a rake, fond of drink and play, scornfully described by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu as "a sorry scoundrel." But Tom Jones was brave, generous, and courteous, in his vices the child of his time, and, despite his vices, very much a man.

A great writer, a great wit, a man of unconquerable spirit was "manly English, Harry Fielding."

## § 5

### LAURENCE STERNE

Laurence Sterne, the author of *Tristram Shandy*, was born in Ireland in November 1713. His father was an ensign in a foot regiment which had served in Flanders and which was disbanded the day after Laurence was born. For a year Laurence with his father and mother stayed with his grandmother in Yorkshire, and then, for nine years, the family led the uncomfortable wandering life of an eighteenth-century soldier, never staying for more than a few months in one place. Sterne retained a considerable affection for his father, who was to some extent the model of "My Uncle Toby."

When he was eighteen he went, with the help of his relatives, to Jesus College, Cambridge. He took Holy Orders, and in 1738 obtained, through the influence of an uncle, the living of Sutton-in-the-Forest, near York. He married in 1741 and was presented to the neighbouring living of Stillington, doing duty at both places and also becoming a prebendary of York Cathedral. The first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy* were published at York in 1759, and they at once made Sterne famous. Other volumes appeared in 1761, 1762, and 1765. He was lionised by London society, and incidentally presented with the perpetual curacy of Coxwold.

Mr. Gosse has described *Tristram Shandy* as an example "of the kind of loosely strung reflective fiction which is hardly a narrative at all." In the strict sense of the word, *Tristram Shandy* is perhaps no more a novel than *The Sentimental Journey*. It is, however, the work of one of the great English humorists, and it contains in Uncle Toby at least a character with a right of place among the immortals. *Tristram Shandy* purposes to be the life of Tristram Shandy, but it is nothing of the sort. At the beginning of the book, the real hero is Shandy senior, who personifies theory run mad, and incidentally, in this first part, there is a vivid sketch, none too complimentary, of Yorick, the incumbent of the parish, who is Sterne himself. As the book proceeds, "My Uncle Toby," the old half-pay

soldier, is its hero. Hazlitt has declared that " My Uncle Toby " is " the most unoffending of God's creatures " and " one of the finest compliments ever paid to human nature." Mr. Walter Sichel has summarised " My Uncle Toby " as :



*Photo : W. A. Mansell & Co.*

" YORICK AND THE GRISETTE," BY GILBERT STUART NEWTON.
Tate Gallery, London.
An incident in Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*.

" A man human in every vein, simple, serious, an amusing grown-up child whose long experience of war taught him to love mankind more than glory or pleasure, and to find in the soldier's temper the greatest surety for peace ; loyal, brave, modest, affectionate, reverent, who ' never spoke of the being and attributes of God but with hesitation ' ;

considerate for all, eager to protect the lives and fortunes of the *few* from the plunderings of the *many*."

Carlyle compared Sterne to Cervantes. Other writers have found resemblance between him and Rabelais. But while Rabelais guffawed, Sterne sniggered. The coarseness and indecency of his writing cannot be accounted for by the fact that he lived in a coarser age. It was something inherent in the man, sick in health and mean in mind, who, despite his gift of humour, was barred from real greatness by the qualities of his soul. He moved Thackeray to something like disgust. "There is not," wrote the author of *Vanity Fair*, "a page in Sterne's writing but has something that were better away, a latent corruption—a hint, as of an impure presence. . . . The foul Satyr's eyes leer out of the leaves constantly." And Coleridge declared that Sterne should be censured for "using the best dispositions of our nature as the panders and condiments for the basest." All this is true—but "My Uncle Toby" remains!

In 1765 Sterne made a long tour through Italy and France, the result of which was his famous *Sentimental Journey*. Three days after the publication of this book in 1768, Sterne died in his lodgings in Old Bond Street.

On a March afternoon in 1768 a party sat at dinner in John Crawford's rooms in Clifford Street. The Dukes of Roxburghe and Grafton were there, and Garrick and Hume. They all knew that in Bond Street, a stone's-throw away, Laurence Sterne was lying ill, and by general consent a footman was sent to inquire how he did. That footman was the only person who saw the author of *Tristram Shandy* die. Sent upstairs by the landlady, he found the great author *in extremis*. Afterwards he wrote some curious memoirs, in which the scene is described: "I went into the room and he was just a-dying. I waited ten minutes, and in five he said, 'Now it is come'! He put up his hands as if to stop a blow, and died in a minute." Where this happened Agnew's Art Gallery now stands.

In addition to *Tristram Shandy* and *The Sentimental Journey*, Sterne published several volumes of sermons, which, according to modern divines, have many outstanding merits. The collection of his letters was published some seven years after his death.

## § 6

### TOBIAS SMOLLETT

Tobias Smollett was born in Dumbartonshire in 1721. He qualified as a doctor at Glasgow University and was apprenticed to a surgeon in that city. At the age of eighteen he made the journey south which every ambitious Scotch youth has made for generations, a journey which he afterwards described in the early chapters of his *Roderick Random*. In 1741 he obtained a position as surgeon's mate on H.M.S. *Cumberland*. He served in the Navy until 1744, and then, having married the daughter of a Jamaica planter, he set up as a surgeon in Downing Street, failing, however, to make much of a living either as a doctor or as a playwright. *The Adventures of Roderick Random* was published in 1748, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* in 1749, *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* in 1753, *The Adventures of Launcelot Greaves* in 1762, and *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* in 1771. In addition to these novels, Smollett wrote plays, travel books, poetry, medical pamphlets, and a history of England.

The finest of Smollett's few poems is "The Tears of Scotland." It was written after the Battle of Culloden, which set all London "mafficking." The first and last of its seven stanzas are these:

Mourn, hapless Caledonia, mourn
Thy banished peace, thy laurels torn
Thy sons, for valour long renowned,
Lie slaughtered on their native ground
Thy hospitable roofs no more
Invite the stranger to the door;
In smoky ruins sunk they lie,
The monuments of cruelty.

. . . . . .

While the warm blood bedews my veins,
And unimpaired remembrance reigns,
Resentment of my country's fate
Within my filial breast shall beat;
And, spite of her insulting foe,
My sympathizing verse shall flow:
"Mourn, hapless Caledonia, mourn
Thy banished peace, thy laurels torn."

Le Sage was Smollett's master, and in *Roderick Random* we have the same series of adventures more or less loosely linked together as we find in *Gil Blas*, the adventures being largely the author's own, the result being " a vigorous and swinging tale of adventure."

*Peregrine Pickle* has many resemblances to *Roderick Random*, and is even more autobiographical. One characteristic of *Peregrine Pickle* is that, for money down, Smollett put into his book the account of two living people who had nothing to do with the story, thus, as Mr. Hannay says, combining journalism with novel-writing.

Sir Walter Scott considered that *Humphry Clinker* is the " most pleasing of Smollett's novels " ; and all the world agrees with him. Thackeray says : " *Humphry Clinker* is, I do think, the most laughable story that has ever been written since the goodly art of novel-writing began."

" In *Humphry Clinker*," says Mr. George Saintsbury, " we have the very best of all his works. It is written in the letter form, the scenes and humours of many places in England and Scotland are rendered with admirable picturesqueness, while the book has seldom been excelled for humorous character of the broad and farcical kind. Matthew Bramble, the testy hypochondriac squire who is at heart one of the best of men, and in head not one of the foolishest ; his sour-visaged and greedy sister Tabitha ; her maid Winifred Jenkins, who has learnt the art of grotesque misspelling from Swift's Mrs. Harris, and has improved upon the teaching ; the Scotch soldier of fortune, Lismahago—these are among the capital figures of English fiction."

Like Fielding, Smollett died and was buried in a foreign country, in Leghorn in 1771.

## § 7

### MRS. RADCLIFFE AND MISS EDGEWORTH

Mrs. Radcliffe, the author of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and other stories, was an ingenious writer, much admired by Scott, a good story-teller, unhampered by a sense of humour, whose style has been faithfully copied in the

modern novelette. She dealt in the night side of life, in the mystery of desolate valleys and tapestried corridors, and in the art of making a reader's blood run cold. As Sir Walter Scott, who respected her genius, said, her appeal was to " the passion of fear, whether excited by natural dangers or by the suggestions of superstition. . . . To break off the narrative when it seemed just on the point of becoming most interesting—to extinguish a lamp just when a parchment containing some hideous secret ought to be read —to exhibit shadowy forms and half-heard sounds of woe— are resources which Mrs. Radcliffe employed with more effect than any other writer of romance." A contemporary wrote of her after her time :

> O Radcliffe ! thou once wert the charmer
> Of girls who sat reading all night !
> Thy heroes were striplings in armour,
> Thy heroines damsels in white.

Such a girl was Jane Austen's first heroine, Catherine Morland, through whom (in *Northanger Abbey*) she pokes fun at the Radcliffe tradition.

In the year 1800 Maria Edgeworth published *Castle Rackrent.* Miss Edgeworth was essentially a moralist. She called her stories " Moral Tales," and she was interested in the homely rather than in the heroic virtues. She was an Irishwoman, and when Scott wrote *Waverley* he professed that his ambition was " in some degree to emulate the admirable Irish portraits of Miss Edgeworth." Contemporary with Miss Edgeworth was the Scottish Susan Ferrier, whom Scott called his " sister shadow," a novelist with a somewhat bitter wit more like Jane Austen than the " moral " Maria Edgeworth.

## § 8

### JANE AUSTEN

With Jane Austen, this survey of the beginning of modern fiction may fitly end.

How did Jane Austen excel ? The answer is prompt. She was a realist. And as a realist, within her own delicately

drawn pen-and-ink circle, she was perfect—a word often applied too carelessly, but here most miraculously justified. She was the chronicler of that most breathless and fascinating fairy-tale in the world, the fairy-tale of our own daily life. Jane Austen set down, for our infinite cosy content, the enthralling details of ourselves and our neighbours—for in essentials a century is lightly spanned—walking and driving and conversing; eating, too, with greater or less appetite, according to the state of our affections. Minor differences there were, of course, between Jane Austen's characters and ourselves. They set higher store on the outward observances of good breeding than we do nowadays. For the rest, they gossiped, and fell in love, and danced, and made mistakes; and occasionally travelled a little by post-chaise or carriage. And if they suffered, it was usually more annoyance than tragedy.

Jane Austen put it all down because it never struck her that it might not be interesting. She was not preoccupied with Form or Art or the Limitations of the Novel, or other inventions of the High-brow to hamper spontaneity. How marvellously Jane Austen, with her elvish talent for burlesquing a prevalent mania, which twinkles and stings in *Love and Friendship* and *Northanger Abbey*, would have twinkled and stung at the expense of an English Hotel Rambouillet!

Yet, as Mr. Saintsbury has admirably said, "simple as are the plots, they are worked out with extraordinary closeness and completeness, and the characters and dialogue are of such astonishing *finesse* and life that it would hardly matter if there were no plot at all. From first to last this hold on life never fails Miss Austen, nor does the simple, suggestive, half-ironic style in which she manages to convey her meaning. Not even Scott's or Thackeray's characters dwell in the mind more securely than John Thorpe, the bragging, babbling undergraduate in *Northanger Abbey*, and the feather-brained, cold-hearted flirt, his sister Isabella; than the Bennet family in *Pride and Prejudice*, every member of which is a masterpiece, and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, the arrogant lady patroness, and Mr. Collins, her willing toady; than Mrs. Norris, half sycophant, half tyrant, in *Mansfield Park*; than the notable chatterer Miss Bates in *Emma*."

§ 9

Biographers regret that the definite facts which can be supplied about Jane Austen's life and doings are few. She was born at Steventon in Hampshire in 1775; her father was a clergyman of moderate means; she had five brothers, four older and one younger than herself; and one intimate and adored elder sister, Cassandra. Two of her brothers became sailors. Jane had a moderately sufficient education and went to school at Reading. She was attractive to look at, and accomplished in games of skill, drawing, music, and needlework; graceful and "finished" in all her movements, and an animated correspondent. As for her literary career, it was, like her life, without extremes; she was neither left to pine in a garret nor feasted as a genius. In fact, she rarely visited London at all; after Steventon, her father moved with his family to Bath. After his death, Mrs. Austen, with Jane and Cassandra, went to live at Southampton.

When Jane Austen died at Winchester in 1817, at the age of forty-two, she was practically unknown in the literary world. She had not put her name to her four published novels (*Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*), though she had allowed her authorship to be known among her friends. In an age of abounding literary society she had met no famous writer or editor and had corresponded with none. She was never in touch with the book-market. Her novels usually lay in her desk a long time before they appeared, and they did not come out in the order in which she wrote them. Her earliest was sold to a Bath publisher in 1803 for £10, and he did nothing with it. A few years later she bought it back from him for the same sum, he little knowing that she was the author of four popular novels. This, the earliest of her stories, did not appear, however, until a year after her death, when it was accompanied through the press by her latest, *Persuasion*. In all she had received £700 for her novels at the time of her death. She was entirely without the money-making idea, and when she received £150 for *Sense and Sensibility* she considered this sum "a prodigious recompense for what had cost her nothing."

§ 10

The lack of facts in our knowledge of Jane Austen certainly need not mean a lack of intimacy. If we know little, we also know everything. Her books are there; and surmising where two twos undoubtedly make five, is always a fascinating pastime. Thus we surmise that she was indolent, for she rarely troubled to invent situations or emotions, but utilised those that were handy, and within her easy reach and cognisance. The same plot, what there was of it, served again and again. Therefore, we argue from analogy, she also did not invent her characters, but drew them from among her acquaintances. It is a pleasing reflection that Mr. Collins and Mrs. Allen and Selina with her "barouche-landau," were actual living people. She had the rare vision to see what was already there, and to enchant it into delicious immobility for our future benefit. Vision, but no imagination. That lack of imagination might account for her unseeing indifference to the lower classes; she can sympathise with straitened means—but her understanding halts and goes numb and blind at the possibility of no means at all.

This, too, Jane Austen's books have revealed to us about Jane Austen: that she lived her short life singularly free from fear. Fear breeds obsessions, and no obsessions have found an outlet in those six novels, so precious for their well-balanced outlook and serene philosophy; except, perhaps, the fear of misunderstanding, and parting through misunderstanding; this, indeed, occurs over and over again between her hero and heroine. Elizabeth and Darcy are separated through Wickham's misrepresentations; Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney through the inexplicable behaviour of the latter's father; Emma and Knightly because he firmly believes Emma has given her heart to Frank Churchill; Elinor Dashwood and Edward . . . the list swells; but perhaps the most feeling example is the long misunderstanding between Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth, owing to Anne's submission to worldly persuasion that he was not a suitable match. *Persuasion* was the last and most mature of Jane Austen's books, and one cannot miss in it the depth of personal conviction in Anne's ruined happiness—for twenty-seven was at that period a hopeless

age for a woman to have reached without attaining matrimony. Who cares to, may read a hint of longing in *Persuasion's* final chapters of perfect reconciliation between Anne and Wentworth: "Thus it should have been—thus it might have been . . . for me!" Were those the author's secret thoughts at the time of writing? Her biographers have traced, from various sources, the existence of one outstanding love-affair in Jane Austen's life. Whether pride or circumstances or death prevented a happy conclusion, is not known. But the knowledge of it adds poignancy to the fact that her every last chapter is a summary of quiet rapture with anticipations into a future of unbroken wedded felicity.

In a letter to a friend Jane Austen compared her novels to "a little bit of ivory, two inches thick," on which she worked "with a brush so fine as to produce little effect after much labour." Never was there such exquisite manners-painting; but the plots are of the slightest. For example, that of *Sense and Sensibility* is really a study of the opposing characters of Elinor Dashwood, who stands for "Sense," and of her sister Marianne, who is the embodiment of "Sensibility"; while the plot is just the narrative of the widely different manner in which they act towards their lovers and their friends. In *Pride and Prejudice* there are again two opposing characters, a priggish lover, Darcy, and a girl of sense and spirit, Elizabeth Bennet, and the plot, if so it can be called, tells only how they squabbled, came gradually to like each other, and were married and lived happily at last. *Mansfield Park* is the story of a young girl, Fanny Price, left penniless, who is adopted into the family circle of her cousins, two sisters, and a son, Edmond; and the plot is little more than the way in which he falls in and out of love with Fanny and how they are married in the end. But these gossamer threads of story are woven into a fabric all a-glisten with the lights and shades of life.

Her principal themes were family life, and—what is rarer in to-day's realism, but evidently played an important part then—neighbourly life, its ebb and flow, actions and reactions, gossip, opportunities of matchmaking, and discussions as to the exact niceties of behaviour. The complications which modern fiction creates out of temperament

then arose mainly from class distinction. Preoccupation with class distinction is so clearly the basis of all major and minor incidents and reflections in Jane Austen's books, that it cannot be ignored as mere personal snobbery on the part of the author. Obviously the upper classes were then soaked to the bone in it. Jane could chuckle at the exaggerated snobbery of Mr. Collins, of Lady Catherine de Burgh, of General Tilney and Sir Walter Elliott and Mr. Elton; but she was certainly not free from it herself; she deprecates marriage where there is any disparity of birth; she converses most seriously on incomes, dowries, rank, and occupation; a slip of good manners in one of her creatures is at once shown up and dwelt upon at length. Emma talks pages of sheer rot to her protégée, Harriett, about the "consequence" she will gain by entering a house like Hartfield on equal footing with its young mistress; Darcy is condemned for jibbing at Elizabeth because some of her relations are in trade—and this, with Emma's reluctance to honour the worthy Coles with her presence at dinner, proves that trade was then very far from mixing with gentility; and that, in spite of the French Revolution, democracy was a long way from England.

Apparently, snobbery and prejudice were at this period, as eternally, peculiar to the older generation; and the young folk, impatient of restriction, were just beginning to emerge from it, winning for themselves more freedom of thought and independence of movement than formerly.

The theme which never alters! The novelists of a hundred years hence will surely still be writing of it.

But Jane Austen chiefly owes her fame to her exquisite and unparalleled gift of comedy. Posterity can never be sufficiently grateful for Mr. Collins, Mr. Woodhouse, Miss Bates, Lady Bertram, Mr. Rushworth, Isabella Thorpe, Miss Jennings, Mrs. Bennet.

To the reader who asks that a novel shall take him "out of himself," Jane Austen's appeal is small. But is that quality the test of a good novel? Is not the true test its power to take us *into* ourselves—that is to say, into our human nature, of which the true and lively exhibition is the very purpose of all drama? It is impossible to make truth look small. The map of Jane Austen's world looks

insignificant at a first glance, but, within it, all is truth, wit, sense, and proportion. The plot seems to be inevitable to the characters, and the characters the very natives of the plot.

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*Clarissa Harlowe*, *Pamela*, Everyman's Library (Dent), and *Sir Charles Grandison* (Routledge).

TOBIAS SMOLLETT.

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JANE AUSTEN.

There are, of course, many editions of Jane Austen's works. Messrs. Macmillan publish an excellent edition with Introductions by Austin Dobson, as follows: *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*.

# XIX

# THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POETS

## § 1

### CHATTERTON

THOMAS CHATTERTON is the most pathetic and dramatic figure in the history of English poetry of the period between Pope and Burns. He was born at Bristol in 1752. For generations his family had held the office of sexton in the Church of St. Mary Redcliffe, and during the poet's life his uncle occupied the family position. His father, who died before his birth, was a musician, something of a poet, and a student of occultism. Chatterton spent his childhood roaming about St. Mary's, learning from his uncle the story of the knights and ecclesiastics whose tombs are in the church, and spelling out old deeds and manuscripts which he found in the muniment room.

He was a lonely precocious boy, writing clever satires before he was twelve, and living his real life in the bygone ages of chivalry and colour. While he was still at school he imagined the romance of one Thomas Rowley, a fifteenth-century monk and poet, whose patron was Master William Canynge, a famous Bristol worthy. Chatterton's persistent study of old manuscripts and his eerie understanding of mediæval England enabled him to write a queer kind of old English, the merit and beauty of which may be gathered from the following quotation from his "The Storie of William Canynge":

> Straight was I carried back to times of yore,
> Whilst Canynge swathed yet in fleshly bed,
> And saw all actions which had been before,
> And all the scroll of Fate unravelled;
> And when the fate-marked babe acome to sight,
> I saw him eager gasping after light.

In all his sheepen gambols and child's play,
  In every merrymaking, fair, or wake,
I kenn'd a perple light of wisdom's ray;
  He ate down learning with the wastel-cake:
As wise as any of the aldermen,
He'd wit enow to make a mayor at ten.

The boy knew that if he admitted that he himself was the author of poems written in an archaic jargon, no one would read them. So he launched one of the most famous of all literary masquerades. He pretended that his poems were the actual work of Thomas Rowley, and that he had discovered the manuscript in a chest in St. Mary Redcliffe. In order to get his manuscript printed, he wrote to Horace Walpole, whose "Castle of Otranto" had just been published, and whose interest in mediæval romance seemed to assure a measure of sympathy and understanding. At first Walpole was interested; but when Chatterton wrote to ask his help in obtaining congenial occupation in London, the ever-cautious Horace discovered that the boy's poetry was really modern and coldly advised the poet to stick to his position in an attorney's office and to postpone the writing of poetry "until he should have made a fortune."

One of his most beautiful pieces of verse is the Minstrel's Song in "Aella," from which we quote the first four verses:

O sing unto my roundelay;
  O drop the briny tear with me:
Dance no more on holiday,
  Like a running river be;
    My love is dead,
    Gone to his death-bed,
    All under the willow-tree.

Black his hair as the winter night,
  White his neck as the summer snow,
Red his face as the morning light,
  Cold he lies in the grave below:
    My love is dead,
    Gone to his death-bed,
    All under the willow-tree.

Sweet his tongue as the throstle's note,
  Quick in dance as thought can be;

Deft his tabor, cudgel stout;
Oh! he lies by the willow-tree.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

Hark! the raven flaps his wing,
In the briered dell below;
Hark! the death-owl loud doth sing,
To the nightmares as they go.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

In the spring of 1770 Chatterton came to London, where, for some months, he contrived to support himself by hack journalism, writing political tirades in the manner of Junius. Payment was bad indeed in the Grub Street of the eighteenth century: Chatterton received only a shilling for each of his articles and less than eighteen pence for his poems. Desperate and disappointed, too proud to accept charity or to go back home, Chatterton poisoned himself with arsenic on August 24, 1770, in his garret in Brook Street, Holborn. He was then seventeen years and nine months old.

Chatterton was buried in the grounds attached to the Shoe Lane workhouse in the parish of St. Andrew's, Holborn. His actual achievements may be of small value, but of his genius there can be no question, and one can only guess what he might have become had the circumstances of his life been happier.

## § 2

### THOMAS GRAY

Gray was born in 1716, his mother being a milliner of Cornhill, who had, however, sufficient means to send the boy to Eton, and afterwards to Cambridge, where he became professor of Modern History. Gray was a first-rate scholar, and indeed, there is something of the classic stamp on all his work. He wrote so little, and in the phrase of Horace, he used the file with such untiring patience, that it has been said of him that no man ever entered the company of



*Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.*

"THE DEATH OF CHATTERTON," BY H. WALLIS.

Tate Gallery, London.

The scene of the tragedy was the house of a Mrs. Angel, a sack-maker in Brook Street, Holborn.

the poets with so small a volume in his hand. Indeed, if we may take the public verdict, that volume might as well contain a single poem, and no more: "The Elegy written in a Country Churchyard"; while, if we choose to follow Doctor Johnson, even this tiny bulk must be diminished. "Sir," said the Doctor, "there are but two good stanzas in Gray's poetry, which are in his 'Elegy.'" He then repeated the stanza.

> For who, to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
> This pleasing anxious being ere resigned,
> Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
> Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?

He added, "The other stanza I forget."

Which was the forgotten stanza? Surely it was either

> Full many a gem of purest ray serene
> The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air;

or perhaps

> Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
> Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
> Along the cool sequestered vale of life
> They kept the even tenor of their way.

Everybody knows how Wolfe recited the "Elegy" before the battle of Quebec and how he declared that he would rather be the author of the poem than the conqueror of the city. And the truth is that, overwrought and artificial as a large proportion of Gray's poetry appears to us to-day, we are still prepared to go a great deal further than the Doctor. To take but two examples, which may serve as types of many, "The Bard" contains those splendid lines

> Ruin seize thee, ruthless King!
> Confusion on thy banners wait;
> Though fanned by Conquest's crimson wing,
> They mock the air with idle state.

And passages of equal splendour can be found further on in the same poem, such as the well-known stanza:

> Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,
> While proudly riding o'er the azure realm
> In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes,
> Youth on the prow and Pleasure at the helm.

Nor is it quite the truth to say that all his lines are filed and chiselled, works of art and not of nature. Where can be found a touch of melody more spontaneous, sweet, and sensitive than such lines as these :

> There pipes the woodlark and the song-thrush there
> Scatters his loose notes on the waste of air.

If we can hardly say that in Gray's book of verses are " infinite riches in a little room," yet it is not without its diamonds of fine water and its pearls of lasting price.

Both Thomas Gray and William Collins, who was born in Chichester in 1721, were rebels against the dead, trim artificialities that characterise the minor English poets who were influenced by Pope. Collins is best remembered as the author of the " Ode to Evening," and of an ode written to the soldiers who were killed at Fontenay and Culloden :

> How sleep the brave, who sink to rest
> By all their country's wishes blest !
> When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,
> Returns to deck their hallow'd mould,
> She there shall dress a sweeter sod
> Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.
>
> By fairy hands their knell is rung.
> By forms unseen their dirge is sung :
> There Honour comes, a pilgrim gray.
> To bless the turf that wraps their clay
> And Freedom shall awhile repair
> To dwell a weeping hermit there !

## § 3

### JAMES THOMSON

James Thomson's " The Seasons " is not among the poems that are for all time, but Thomson has an interesting place in literary history. He lived in an artificial age, and he revolted, though not very successfully, against the stucco artificiality of which Horace Walpole was the great protagonist. Thomson wrote " The Seasons " in blank verse, reverting back to the manner of Milton—with, of course, none of his genius—and this verse is a relief to the

fashionable eighteenth-century rhymed couplets. Thomson knew the country and loved it. His love never found the dainty expression that has given Herrick immortality. But it was real, and despite the occasional and probably inevitable lapses into the artificial he certainly heard "strains of the fairy world and the fairy songs." In a sense he was the forerunner of Scott and Wordsworth, though Wordsworth sneered at his "false and sentimental commonplaces."

"The Castle of Indolence," which took him fifteen years to write, is perhaps the most highly finished and poetical of his works. The following extract will give a good idea of its style, which has much in it of Spenser's charm and sweetness:

A pleasing land of drowsyhead it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
Forever flushing round a summer sky:
There eke the soft delights that witchingly
Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast,
But whate'er smack'd of noyance or unrest
Was far, far off expell'd from this delicious nest.

Thomson was a Scot. He was born in Roxburghshire in 1700, and was educated at Edinburgh University. He was intended for the Church, but after the death of his father, in an attempt to lay a ghost in a haunted house, he came to London to seek his fortune as a poet. "Winter," the first part of "The Seasons," was published in 1726, and the poem was completed four years later. Thomson wrote other poems and several dramas, all of which are forgotten. Thanks to the good offices of the Prince of Wales, he was given the sinecure office of Surveyor-General of the Leeward Islands, with a salary of £300 a year, and this with his earnings as a poet enabled him to live a pleasant, modest, and rather lazy life in his house at Kew Lane, where his cellar was well stocked with Scotch ale:

The world forsaking with a calm disdain,
Here laughed he careless in his easy seat;
Here quaffed encircled with the joyous train,
Oft moralising sage: his ditty sweet.
He loathed much to write, nor cared to repeat.

In "The Seasons" Thomson's thought, as Coleridge said, is natural—and that was a great thing in the eighteenth century—even when his style is verbose and tiresome. The following description of a summer morning is Thomson at his best:

With quickened step,
Brown Night retires: young Day pours in apace,
And opens all the lawny prospect wide.
The dripping rock, the mountain's misty top,
Swell on the sight, and brighten with the dawn.
Blue, through the dusk, the smoking currents shine;
And from the bladed field the fearful hare
Limps, awkward: while along the forest-glade
The wild deer trip, and, often turning, gaze
At early passenger. Music awakes
The native voice of undissembled joy;
And thick around the woodland hymns arise.
Roused by the cock, the soon clad shepherd leaves
His mossy cottage, where with Peace he dwells;
And from the crowded fold, in order, drives
His flock, to taste the verdure of the morn.

He died in 1748.

§ 4

WILLIAM COWPER

William Cowper, who was born in 1731, has been aptly described as a link between Thomson and Wordsworth—that is, he threw off the last traces of Pope's artifice of style and the view of nature as a trim parterre. He lived the quietest of country lives; he loved children, cats, hares, and flowers; but, if he shared Wordsworth's passion for the lakes, the mountains, and the starry heavens, it was rather for their external beauty than for the mysterious life of things, the spirit that may be felt but not seen, which Wordsworth, in a still communion, drank into his soul. Yet many of Cowper's best-known lines have a certain grandeur in simplicity which has kept them sweet and living. Such is the splendid hymn, "God moves in a mysterious way," and the dirge on the loss of the *Royal George*:

Toll for the brave!
The brave that are no more!
All sunk beneath the wave,
Fast by their native shore!

Toll for the brave!
  Brave Kempenfelt is gone;
His last sea-fight is fought;
  His work of glory done.

Weigh the vessel up,
  Once dreaded by our foes!
And mingle with our cup
  The tears that England owes.

Her timbers yet are sound,
  And she may float again,
Full charged with England's thunder,
  And plough the distant main.

But Kempenfelt is gone,
  His victories are o'er;
And he and his eight hundred
  Shall plough the wave no more.

Nor can the lines on his Mother's Portrait be easily surpassed. Many of the passages, so sweet and sad and simple, are such as, having once been read, can never be forgotten.

Oh that those lips had language! Life has passed
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.
Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,
The same that oft in childhood solaced me; . . .
I heard the bell tolled on thy burial day,
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
And, turning from my nursery window, drew
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu! . . .

Cowper suffered from hysteria, and was for a while shut up in a private asylum. After his recovery, religion became an obsession with him and coloured the rest of his life, sometimes obviously affording him comfort, and at other times filling him with hopeless despair.

But it must not be forgotten that, although one of the most melancholy of poets, Cowper had his lighter hours. We need only call to mind "John Gilpin," and his letters to Mrs. Unwin, so full of gayest wit.

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Excellent editions of the works of the following poets are published by the Oxford University Press in the "Oxford Standard Authors" and the "Oxford Poets": William Cowper, George Crabbe, Thomas Gray and William Collins (1 vol.), and James Thomson.

# XX

# DR. JOHNSON AND HIS CIRCLE

## § 1

IT is curious rather than obvious that we should at this day refer so naturally to the mid-eighteenth century period of our literature as the Age of Johnson. For Dr. Johnson cannot, except in a special sense, or without explanation, be called the greatest literary man of his time. He had none of Burke's splendour of genius, none of Goldsmith's excellent lightness of touch and "legal tender" of humour; he was inferior to Gibbon in learning and staying-power; Sheridan's rapier wit and easy invention were quite beyond him; his poetry cannot be compared with Gray's, nor was his prose half so English and transparent as Wesley's. Yet such were his personality and influence that we involuntarily give his name to his period.

Samuel Johnson was born on September 18, 1709, at Lichfield. He was the son of Michael Johnson, a bookseller of that small cathedral city. He was trained under his father to be himself a bookseller, and he could bind a book with his own hands. Probably he never attempted such a thing after he left Lichfield. In after life he preferred the risk of chemical experiments, and did not consider too narrowly whether the risk was his own or other people's. But later in his life, when visiting Lichfield, he called at the bookshop of Mr. Major Morgan, who had in some degree succeeded to old Michael Johnson's business. Taking up one of the books, he "recollected the binding to be the work of his own hands." Otherwise, Johnson was of little service to his father: he read books instead of selling them, and confessed afterwards that "to supersede the pleasures of reading by the attentions of traffic was a task he could never master."

He inherited a taint of scrofula, and in early childhood

was taken to London by his mother to be touched by Queen Anne for "the king's evil." He inherited also, from his father, what he called "a vile melancholy." He began his book-learning at a dame school in Lichfield, continued it at Lichfield School, where he was taught Latin, and then at Stourbridge he spent a year as half schoolboy, half usher, miserably enough. After two years of idleness—which meant desultory reading in his father's shop—he was entered as a Commoner of Pembroke College, Oxford, the expense being defrayed by friends of his father. In his Oxford years he was afflicted, as few young men have ever been, by "an horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience," a malady which he was never to outgrow. In 1731 he returned to Lichfield to see his father die and to face the world on his own account with unsettled aims and the sum of twenty pounds.

He began his adult career as a sort of miscellaneous journalist in Birmingham, writing for a local paper, and translating Lobo's *Voyage to Abyssinia* for a bookseller, thus absorbing the background of his allegorical tale *Rasselas*. On slender means and with a future that was all vague he married, at the age of twenty-six, a widow, Elizabeth Porter, who was twenty years his senior and was possessed of £1000. They set up a small country school. But in 1737 Johnson started for London to lead the literary life as it could then be lived.

His first employer in London was Edward Cave, the proprietor of the then young but well-established *Gentleman's Magazine*. His principal task was to report by hearsay, or from his own imagination, the principal speeches in the Parliamentary Debates. We hear of no raptures in his contemplation of London. On the contrary, he lost little time in writing and publishing his satire, "London," imitated from Juvenal, in which, with more than a little pose, he lashed the vices and social conditions of the town —which he was to live in and love for the rest of his days— even to the point of exclaiming:

> Who would leave, unbrib'd, Hibernia's land,
> Or change the rocks of Scotland for the Strand?

He received £10 for the poem and, what was more

valuable in the end, the praise of Pope. His career had begun.

Odds and ends of "Grubb Street" work occupied his next years apart from his contributions to the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Miscellaneous essays and translations followed each other. But in 1744 he wrote, "at a white heat," his Life of Richard Savage, the wastrel poet, who had been his earliest companion in London. This will be referred to later. It did much to establish his reputation in 1744. In 1749 appeared his fine poem "The Vanity of Human Wishes." He was no longer unknown or in extreme poverty. Moreover, he was about to embark, at the suggestion of Robert Dodsley, the bookseller, on the greatest work of his life. This was his *Dictionary of the English Language*, to which we had best come at once.

After occupying a succession of lodgings in and about London, Johnson and his wife had settled in the house, No. 17 Gough Square, Fleet Street, which is now his London "shrine" and the home of the Johnson Club. Here he took off his coat, so to speak, to his great task.

Johnson did not, of course, work single-handed. He employed no fewer than six amanuenses in the long top front garret of his house. In this garret the meetings of the Johnson Club are now held. His assistants were the two Macbeans; Mr. Shiels, who afterwards helped with the *Lives of the Poets*; Mr. Stewart, a son of an Edinburgh bookseller; a Mr. Maitland; and a Mr. Peyton. Johnson's payments of twenty-three shillings a week to each of these assistants reduced his agreed remuneration of £1575 to an inconsiderable residue, and the work made the heaviest demands on his time and strength. Dr. Birkbeck Hill thinks that he had in view his own experience of big literary undertakings when, referring to Pope's slow progress in translating the "Iliad," he wrote: "Indolence, interruption, business, and pleasure all take their turns of retardation; and every long work is lengthened by a thousand causes that can, and ten thousand that cannot, be recounted."

But the work went on. Johnson began as the makers of our own *New English Dictionary* began—by collecting quotations. Against each, in the margin, he wrote the

first letter of the word under which it was to occur. His clerks transcribed all these sentences on separate slips. With these in hand he dictated his definitions, and supplied the etymologies from whatever sources were available. He



DR. JOHNSON'S HOUSE IN GOUGH SQUARE, FLEET STREET.
It was here that Johnson compiled his Dictionary and wrote *Rasselas*.

had hoped to be done in three years. But the three years became seven, and we have the well-known story of Andrew Millar, the actual publisher, saying, when he received the last sheet, "Thank God, I have done with him," and Johnson's smiling comment, "I am glad that he thanks God for anything."

A fairly long list could be made of words to which, in

sport or petulance, Johnson attached indefensible meanings. But some of the humours of the Dictionary were not of this class, being unconscious. Thus he defined "pastern" as "the knee of a horse." Asked by a lady how he came to do this, he replied with admirable frankness, "Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance." Similar frankness, on another occasion, was more injurious to his interviewer. Soon after the Dictionary appeared Garrick, being asked by Johnson what people said of it, replied that among other things it was objected that he had quoted authors whose style was beneath the dignity of such a work, as, for instance, Samuel Richardson. "Nay," said Johnson, "I have done worse than that; I have cited thee, David."

The work appeared on April 15, 1755, in two folio volumes, at the price of £4 10*s*., and was received with wonder and acclamation. "I may surely," he wrote, "be contented without the praise of perfection, which if I could obtain in this gloom of solitude, what would it avail me? I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave." But there was some morbid exaggeration here.

The Dictionary did not absorb all Johnson's energies between 1748 and 1755. On March 20, 1750, the first essay of his *Rambler* appeared. Following the model of Addison's *Spectator*, Johnson came forth, says Boswell, as "a majestick teacher of moral and religious wisdom." It is worth noting that just as the *Spectator* and *Tatler* had been largely inspired by the talk of the Queen Anne coffee-houses, Johnson's essays reflected in some measure the conversations he enjoyed in the Club he had founded in Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row. During just two years Johnson wrote two essays a week for publication on Tuesdays and Fridays. He invariably supplied his copy at the last moment, and he rarely read a proof; but he revised all the essays carefully for the collected edition. The success of the production was not great. As author Johnson received four guineas a week, which worked out at a guinea per thousand words; and the sales, at twopence, did not reach five hundred copies a day. But there were compensations. Mrs. Johnson said to him: "I thought very well of you before, but I did not imagine you could have written anything equal to this." Nor was self-

approval wanting: Johnson said to a friend, "My other works are wine and water, but my *Rambler* is pure wine."

Of the 208 *Rambler* essays Johnson wrote all but four or five. A general idea of their subject-matter may be conveyed by giving a few typical titles. Such are:

Folly of Anger: Misery of a Peevish Old Age.
Various Arts of Self-Delusion.
Advantages of Mediocrity: An Eastern Fable.
Reasons Why Advice is Generally Ineffectual.
A Proper Audience Necessary to a Wit.
A Critical Examination of "Samson Agonistes."
Cruelty of Parental Tyranny.
Directions to Authors Attacked by Critics.
History of a Legacy-Hunter.
Effect of Sudden Riches upon the Manners.

Titles of essays, however, convey little; treatment is all. Johnson's style as an essayist was as heavy-handed and turgid as Steele's or Addison's was light, limpid, and resourceful. Indeed, he criticised his work in a phrase when, says Boswell, "having read over one of his Ramblers, Mr. Langton asked him how he liked that paper; he shook his head, and answered, 'too wordy.'" The same verdict may be passed on his later *Idler* essays, though in these a livelier fancy and an easier style are sometimes visible.

Mr. Augustine Birrell has compared the march of Johnson's sentences to the measured tread of a well-drilled company of soldiers. His style is well suited to the expression of large verdicts and sombre reflections. Take this declaration of Shakespeare's permanence:

> The sand heaped by one flood is scattered by another, but the rock always continues in its place. The stream of time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabricks of other poets, passes without injury the adamant of Shakespeare.

Or the famous passage in his last *Idler* essay:

> There are few things, not purely evil, of which we can say, without some emotion of uneasiness, this is the last. Those who never could agree together shed tears when mutual discontent has determined them to

final separation; of a place which has been frequently visited, though without pleasure, the last look is taken with heaviness of heart; and the Idler, with all his chilliness of tranquillity, is not wholly unaffected by the thought that his last essay is before him.

The secret horror of the last is inseparable from a thinking being, whose life is limited, and to whom death is dreadful. We always make a secret comparison between a part and the whole; the termination of any period of life reminds us that life itself has likewise its termination; when we have done anything for the last time we involuntarily reflect that a part of the days allotted to us is past, and that as more is past there is less remaining.

Johnson's last year in Gough Square was clouded by the death of his mother, at the age of ninety. In the *Idler* (No. 41) he referred to this event in those words of sombre beauty: "The last year, the last day, must come. It has come, and is past. The life which made my own life pleasant is at an end, and the gates of death are shut upon my prospects." To relieve his heart, and to pay his mother's funeral expenses, he sat down and wrote his allegorical story on the theme "Vanitas vanitatum," *Rasselas*, in the evenings of a single week in the spring of 1759. He received £75 for it, and £25 for its second edition. It is constantly stated that *Rasselas* was written in Johnson's next residence, in Staple Inn, Holborn, but an examination of relevant dates in Boswell's *Life* shows that this is impossible. It is certain that *Rasselas* was written in Gough Square. There, from night to night, the princely wanderers from the happy valley in Abyssinia travelled on in their vain search for greater happiness; there Imlac grew eloquent and Pekuah timid, the Pyramids were measured, and the Astronomer rescued from the mists of his distraught imagination; and there Johnson penned that quiet "Conclusion, in which nothing is concluded," save only that "they deliberated a while what was to be done, and resolved, when the inundation should cease, to return to Abissinia." *Rasselas* gives us the moralisations of the *Rambler* and the *Idler* thinly connected by a story. It is now the most widely read of Johnson's prose writings, while it has a close affinity, in mood and motive, to the best of his poems, written ten years earlier, "The Vanity of Human Wishes." A low thunder of melancholy reflection on the transitoriness of human glory and the ironies of fate is heard in every line



*Photo : Risch itz Collection.*

"A LITERARY PARTY AT SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS," BY JAMES E. DOYLE.

*Reading from left to right :* Jas. Boswell Dr. Johnson, Joshua Reynolds, David Garrick, Edmund Burke, Pascal Paoli, Chas. Burney, Walton, and Oliver Goldsmith.

of this poem. A famous passage is that in which Johnson refers to the hard lot of the writer and the scholar :

> Yet hope not life from grief or danger free,
> Nor think the doom of man reversed for thee :
> Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
> And pause a while from learning, to be wise ;
> There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
> Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail.
> See nations, slowly wise, and meanly just,
> To buried merit raise the tardy bust.
> In dreams yet flatter, once again attend.
> Hear Lydiat's life, and Galileo's end.

Equally memorable is the passage in which he draws conclusions from the fate of Charles of Sweden, sunk from splendour into exile :

> His fall was destined to a barren strand,
> A petty fortress, and a dubious hand ;
> He left the name at which the world grows pale,
> To point a moral, or adorn a tale.

Another literary labour begun by Johnson in Gough Square was his annotated edition of Shakespeare. He had projected it as early as 1744. It was not until 1756, when the Dictionary was off his hands, that he began his task, which continued to be a comedy of delay. He announced, so to speak, with tucked wrist-bands, that the edition would be ready by the Christmas of the following year. Subscriptions flowed in. He finished it in just nine years ! His industry had to be stoked with guineas, and the stoking was perhaps done by his publisher with too little science.

In 1777, in his last Fleet Street house, in Bolt Court, Johnson began his fine series of critical biographies, the *Lives of the Poets*, written originally to be prefaces to an edition of the English poets published by a group of booksellers in 1779–81. The *Lives* is his best and most enduring work. It exhibits at once the narrowness of his conceptions of poetry and literature, and the force and acuteness of his understanding within its range of interests. He had little feeling for any poetry but that of his own period. But against this fact may be set Mr. Augustine Birrell's remarks : " Johnson is every bit as interesting when he is writing about Sprat, or Smith, or Fenton, as when he has got Milton or

Gray in hand. He is also much less provoking. My own favourite life is that of Sir Richard Blackmore. The poorer the poet the kindlier is the treatment he receives. Johnson kept all his rough words for Shakespeare, Milton, and Gray."

The longest of the *Lives* is the best from the biographical standpoint, that of his early friend Savage, who has already been mentioned; and the best critical essays are those of Dryden, Pope, and Cowley. With all their faults the *Lives* abound in passages of acute discernment and vigorous common sense. The biographical parts of the work gave Johnson a great deal of trouble in the collection of facts. His information was drawn from many and varied quarters, "from books, and partly from sources which had long been closed; from old Grub Street traditions; from the talk of forgotten poetasters and pamphleteers who had long been lying in parish vaults." Happily he simplified his style in sympathy with his subjects.

If so many moderating judgments have to be passed on Johnson's writings it may fairly be asked, How came his vast ascendancy in the literary world of his age, and why do his name and fame persist as they do? For it can be said, without much risk of dispute, that the three names in our literature which, above all others, have "got through" to the simplest and least literate minds in this country are those of Shakespeare, Dr. Johnson, and Charles Dickens. It may even be ventured that Dr. Johnson's name, brought into an argument in a village inn or a London cabmen's shelter, is accepted more readily than Shakespeare's. This lasting potency rests firstly on Johnson's Dictionary. For although this was not by any means the first English work of its kind, it counts as the first in the popular mind and, in a sense, it counts also as the last. To ask or doubt the meaning of a word is still, by tradition, to invite an appeal to Dr. Johnson, and since the need to define words and terms is ever recurrent, the lexicographer's name is for ever enmeshed in the inquiry. Secondly, the prowess of Johnson in talk and argument has appealed to the common mind. A fist heavily brought down on a tavern table with the name of Dr. Johnson uttered will still carry weight and secure a pause in the argument. This is the very spell

which the Doctor exercised over his friends, acquaintances, and distant admirers in his lifetime. To his talk far more than to his writings, he owed the title of literary dictator, given to him by Chesterfield, and that of the Great Cham of Literature first bestowed on him, probably, by Tobias Smollett. Bacon said: "Reading maketh a full man; conference, a ready man; and writing, an exact man." Johnson read deeply, conferred much, and wrote in varying degrees of industry. Yet with all this equipment he might not have been the genius he was in conversation. He might never have been able to impress men and women by his talk as he did in the remotest districts of Scotland, where they fell prostrate under his spell. "He is a dungeon of wit," said Lady Lochbuy. "It is music to hear this man speak," was the verdict of Ulinish when Johnson had explained—the entire process of tanning!

The chief ingredients of his talk were wit, sense, and information; his secret was that he had these in overwhelming abundance and was never at a loss. Often wrong, he was never weak. If he had not been often and impressively in the right he could not have become the literary dictator of his age. He talked for victory. He did not discourse lonesomely and at large, like Coleridge. He talked because he was talked to, and his aim was to set right what he thought had been said amiss: one foe crushed, one fallacy exposed, he was ready for the next. "May there not," pleaded Boswell with him one day, "may there not, sir, be very good conversation without a contest for superiority?" Johnson replied, "No *animated* conversation, sir." Nothing but animated talk served him. Boswell once found him highly satisfied with his prowess on the preceding evening. "Well, we had a good talk." "Yes, sir," said Boswell, "you *tossed and gored* several persons."

As Mr. Birrell says, "They came to be tossed and gored. And, after all, are they much to be pitied? They have our sympathy, and the Doctor has our applause."

One's sympathies, indeed, are with old Moser, the Swiss Keeper of the Royal Academy, who so annoyed Goldsmith by exclaiming, "Stay! Stay! Toctor Shonson is going to zay zomething." The interrupter is still laughed at, yet his behaviour crystallises Johnson's extraordinary

ascendancy in conversation. Men did listen to him like that.

§ 2

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

It is time, indeed, to bring Oliver Goldsmith on the scene. He was Johnson's junior by nineteen years, and we have no precise record of their first meeting. No two men of the eighteenth century have been so familiarised to us by biographers. Goldsmith was the son of a poor Irish vicar, the Rev. Charles Goldsmith, and was born in his father's vicarage at Pallas in the county of Longford. Two years after his birth the family removed to the village of Lissoy, in the county of Westmeath, where the vicar had obtained a more lucrative living. It is practically certain that the homely everyday sights and some of the personalities of Lissoy were haunting him when, in 1770, he wrote his finest poem, "The Deserted Village." Its first lines are full of wistful memory :

> Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain,
> Where health and plenty cheered the labouring swain;
> Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
> And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed,
> Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
> Seats of my youth, where every sport could please;
> How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
> Where humble happiness endeared each scene!

The portrait of the old village parson includes a very beautiful simile.

> To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
> But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.
> As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
> Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
> Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
> Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

But the most tender lines of all are those in which the storm-tossed man of letters in London tells of his unfulfilled dream of ending his life amid the scenes in which it had begun. And here again is another beautiful simile.

In all my wanderings round this world of care
In all my griefs—and God has given my share—
I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,
Amid these humble bowers to lay me down,
To husband out life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting, by repose.
. . . . . .
And as an hare whom hounds and horns pursue,
Pants to the place from which at first she flew,
I still had hopes my long vexations past,
Here to return—and die at home at last.

In 1745 Goldsmith entered Trinity College, Dublin, as a poor sizar, exposed to many humiliations. To earn a little money he wrote street ballads, for which he obtained five shillings each. In 1747 he gained an exhibition, and to celebrate his success invited friends of both sexes to a dance in his rooms, which was violently interrupted by his outraged tutor. His college career remained stormy and unhappy, but he took his B.A. degree in 1749. Two years were spent by him at his mother's cottage at Ballymahon. Then he meditated emigration to America, but thought better of it, and in 1752 he went to Edinburgh to study medicine, helped by funds supplied by his Uncle Contarine. His restless spirit drove him abroad in 1754, and during two years he was lost in mysterious wanderings which took him to Paris, Strasburg, Padua, Switzerland, and various parts of France, thus storing the impressions and sentiments which ten years later were to establish his fame as a poet on the publication of "The Traveller." He sent the first sketch of it home to his brother Henry, to whom he wrote the exquisite lines :

Eternal blessings crown my earliest friend,
And round his dwelling guardian saints attend;
Bless'd be that spot, where cheerful guests retire
To pause from toil, and trim their evening fire;
Bless'd that abode, where want and pain repair,
And every stranger finds a ready chair;
Bless'd be those feasts with simple plenty crown'd,
Where all the ruddy family around
Laugh at the jests or pranks that never fail,
Or sigh with pity at some mournful tale;
Or press the bashful stranger to his food,
And learn the luxury of doing good.

From all this wandering and reflecting—so mysteriously

financed—Goldsmith returned to England, without invitation or engagement, and, practically, without a penny in his pocket. He landed at Dover on February 1, 1756, with a medical degree of which he never gave a clear account, and which was never authenticated. Not long afterwards he became an usher in a school kept by one Dr. Milner, at Peckham. That is why there is a "Goldsmith Road" in Peckham to-day. Through the Milners, however, he was introduced to Griffiths, the "bookseller" (*i.e.* eighteenth-century publisher) and thus to the literary world.

In 1757 he became Griffiths's tame author, living in a house in Paternoster Row, on a salary from Griffiths, and under the thumb of Mrs. Griffiths, who revised all he wrote. It was a bad time for friendless authors. As John Forster says, "the patron was gone, and the public had not come." Griffiths owned and published the *Monthly Review*, and Goldsmith did "hack" reviews for it. In the year mentioned he wrote that he was making shift to live by "a very little practice as a physician and a very little reputation as a poet." His first definite success was not his laborious and now unread *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* (which, however, cannot be neglected by literary annalists), but his admirably humorous and pungent "Chinese Letters" written for John Newbery's *Public Ledger* in 1760, and afterwards published in volume as *The Citizen of the World*. Following a literary vogue of the time he identified himself with a Chinese savant, visiting London and sending to a Pekin friend a series of letters containing his impressions of London and English life generally. This was a mere pose, and in reality Goldsmith wrote *The Citizen* in his own character, and in it expressed, or insinuated, his own opinions. *The Citizen of the World* can, with judicious skipping, be read to-day with delight, particularly for its delineation of such characters as Beau Tibbs and the "Man in Black."

Goldsmith's way of life had hitherto been that of the hack-writer in the garret; but now fortune began to smile on him sufficiently to warrant a change of residence. No longer a starveling garreteer, he is discovered in decent lodgings in Wine Office Court, Fleet Street. Dr. Johnson, who had certainly met him before, becomes his visitor and

closer friend. And here on a memorable evening Goldsmith entertains him and Mr., afterwards Bishop, Percy. The Doctor came to Goldsmith's dressed more neatly and respectably than he was wont to be seen, and, on Percy remarking the change, said, "Why, sir, I hear that Goldsmith, who is a very great sloven, justifies his disregard of cleanliness and decency by quoting my practice; and I am desirous this night to show him a better example." Thus was inaugurated one of the finest friendships in literary history. It was cemented in 1764, when Johnson rescued his friend from the hands of bailiffs and the threat of prison. What happened was told by Johnson himself to Boswell:

> I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and, as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it, and saw its merit; told the landlady I should soon return; and, having gone to a bookseller, sold it for £60. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill.

It was Goldsmith's employer, John Newbery, of St. Paul's Churchyard, who bought the *Vicar*. But he did so only on Johnson's advice, and kept the manuscript two years before he published it.

In the details of its plot, *The Vicar of Wakefield* is not a great novel. Goldsmith wrote in his "Advertisement" to the book, "There are a hundred faults in this Thing," and this is true. The beauty of the book lies in its incidental comedy, and in its exquisite touches of simple human nature. It touched the hearts of English, German, and French readers equally. The sophisticated Goethe loved it as a statement of those things which "redeem men from all the errors of life."

Goldsmith's genius for light and natural comedy is equally shown in his plays, *The Good-Natured Man* and *She*



*Photo : Rischgitz Collection.*

"DR. JOHNSON RESCUING GOLDSMITH FROM HIS LANDLADY."

*After E. M. Ward, R.A.*

It is not quite certain whether the scene of this famous interview was in Wine Office Court. Fleet Street or in Islington.

*Stoops to Conquer*. The scene, in the latter, in which the squire drills his men-servants in proper behaviour before they wait on his guests at dinner, is one of the best in British comedy.

In the last five or six years of his life Goldsmith was not poor, though neither was he rich. He was a greatly loved member of the famous Literary Club founded by Johnson. He died in his Temple chambers in Buck Court on April 9, 1774. When the news came to Sir Joshua Reynolds he put aside his brush for the day. Edmund Burke burst into tears. To-day Goldsmith's gravestone in the Temple, which marks only approximately the place of his burial, is visited by lovers of his character and genius.

## § 3

### EDMUND BURKE

Intellectually Burke was the greatest man in the Johnson Circle. He is vividly figured for us by Boswell and others. Edmund Burke was essentially a political thinker who used literature to embellish his speeches and writings. His early work, the *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, is now little read, but Lord Morley points out its enduring merit: "It was a vigorous enlargement of the principle, which Addison had not long before timidly illustrated, that critics of art seek its principles in the wrong place, so long as they limit their search to poems, pictures, engravings, statues, and buildings, instead of first arranging the sentiments and faculties in man to which art makes its appeal."

Lord Morley, too, affirms that three of Burke's publications, the *Speech on American Taxation*, the *Speech on Conciliation with America*, and the *Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol*, form "the most perfect manual in our literature, or in any literature, for one who approaches the study of public affairs."

Burke's writings stretch the reader's mind, as his talk stretched Johnson's. His prose is one of the richest literary fabrics in the language, abounding in brilliant analysis and noble imagery. "It was Burke's peculiarity and his

glory," says Mr. Birrell, " to apply the imagination of a poet of the first order to the facts and the business of life. Arnold says of Sophocles, ' He saw life steadily, and saw it whole.' Substitute for the word ' life ' the words ' organised society,' and you get a peep into Burke's mind. There was a catholicity about his gaze. He knew how the whole world lived. . . . Wordsworth has been called the High Priest of Nature. Burke may be called the High Priest of Order —a lover of settled ways, of justice, peace, and security. His writings are a storehouse of wisdom, not the cheap shrewdness of the mere man of the world, but the noble animating wisdom of one who has the poet's heart as well as the statesman's brain." The work in which these qualities of Burke can be most profitably and enjoyably studied by the general reader is of course his *Reflections on the French Revolution*, that great plea for order and continuity in human government, and for justice and sympathy between nations and citizens. The following vision of Marie Antoinette illustrates the splendours of prose to which Burke rose with ease.

It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in, glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendour, and joy. Oh! what a revolution! and what a heart must I have to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom; little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour, and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise, is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness.

Many other members of what may be called the Johnson Circle—Samuel Richardson, Sheridan, Gibbon, and others —are dealt with in other and more appropriate chapters. It should be remembered Johnson linked himself to the history of English fiction not only by his admiration of Richardson, who, he said, "enlarged the knowledge of human nature, and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue," but by his later fatherly encouragement of Fanny Burney (afterwards Madame d'Arblay), the first really notable English woman novelist. Her *Evelina*, published in 1778, was an instant success. Dr. Johnson declared that passages in it were worthy of Richardson; and Burke, Gibbon, Reynolds, and Sheridan swelled the applause. Fanny Burney never quite repeated this success, though her novel, *Cecilia* (1782), can be read to-day with delight. Professor Saintsbury thus characterises her four novels: "*Evelina*, delectable; *Cecilia*, admirable; *Camilla*, estimable; *The Wanderer*, impossible." Her *Diary and Letters* are wonderfully vivacious records of the Court of George III, and of the literary society which she enjoyed. They form a great contribution to our knowledge of her period, which extended to the first three years of the Victorian age.

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# XXI

# EDWARD GIBBON AND OTHER EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PROSE-WRITERS

## § 1

### GIBBON

IT does not come within our province to trace here the development of historical writings. Such writing came early into existence and has continued through the ages. For English readers, four historians are of greater importance than all others—Gibbon, Macaulay, Carlyle, and Froude, and we might add John Richard Green.

Towards the middle of the eighteenth century the first remarkable development in the writing of history in England showed itself. David Hume was both philosopher and historian, but neither his philosophy nor his history can be dealt with in this "OUTLINE OF LITERATURE." Taking all things into account, many of us would be prepared to agree with Mr. Frederic Harrison that Gibbon is the supreme historian of all lands and ages. Yet that would not prevent our also concurring with Lord Acton that Macaulay is the greatest of all writers of History. Nor would this verdict preclude us from asserting that, for sheer beauty and ease of style, Froude remains unequalled. Finally, we would gladly acknowledge that in historical intuition, and in the power of delineating character by a phrase, no man since Tacitus has ever rivalled Thomas Carlyle.

Edward Gibbon was born in 1737 at Putney. His school and college career gave little promise of the eminence to which he was to attain. After a few years profitably employed in acquiring a grounding in the classical languages at Westminster School, he proceeded, at the then not unusual age of fifteen, to Magdalen College, Oxford. There he spent what he himself, in his interesting *Autobiography*,

calls " fourteen unprofitable months." It was the dark age of the old Universities ; and Gibbon seems to have received not the slightest assistance or encouragement in his studies from the tutors of the place. But he read voraciously. Soon he gave up his Anglican creed, and after remaining for some time undecided between Mohammed and the Pope, eventually made his choice in favour of the Roman Church. These religious vagaries of his youthful son so alarmed the elder Gibbon that he decided to break short his University career, and to send him into exile at the home of an amiable and cultured Swiss pastor at Lausanne.

This proved to be the turning-point in the historian's life ; for during some of the most formative years he was thrown among French influences, just when those influences were most powerful. It was the age of the Encyclopædia, of Diderot, Condorcet, Voltaire, and Rousseau. Of these two last Rousseau had been born at Geneva ; and the rugged peaks at which Gibbon gazed across the lake looked down upon the waters of Annecy, where his romantic genius began to unfold itself. Voltaire had retired to his castle at Ferney, within easy distance of Lausanne. From these facts two things resulted—Gibbon was converted from Catholicism, not to Anglicanism, but to scepticism, and he became really more French than English.

While at Lausanne, for the only time in his life, he fell in love. The object of his affections was a Swiss girl called Susanne Curchod. But the Fates were not propitious. His father was again alarmed, and sent stringent injunctions to his son to abandon the courtship.

We should, perhaps, think more highly of Gibbon had he persisted ; but he did not. To quote his own words, he " sighed as a lover and obeyed as a son." Susanne, some time later, became the wife of Necker—the able financier who strove to save France from bankruptcy in 1789—and the mother of the famous Madame de Staël.

§ 2

*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is probably the greatest history of all time. It was as he sat among the ruins of the Capitol in 1765, watching the sun going down



*Photo : Richsgitz Collection.* *Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Liverpool.*

JULIAN THE APOSTATE PRESIDING AT A CONFERENCE OF SECTARIANS.

After the painting by E. Armitage, R.A.
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

over the Eternal City, that Gibbon conceived the colossal and magnificent scheme of narrating the history of the decay of the power of Rome, beginning with the great age of the Antonines, and ending with the capture of Constantinople by the Turks. Fourteen centuries were comprised in the vast panorama, among them some of the most vital epochs in the history of the world. He had to deal in turn with the decline of the Roman state, the rise and triumph of Christianity, the founding of the Byzantine Empire, the victories of Mohammedanism, the religious and political differences and cleavages of the Middle Ages, the rise of national states in the West, and the great duel between the Empire and the encroaching Turks in the East. Here was labour for a veritable Hercules—to examine and digest all the extant authorities; afterwards to select the material from the immaterial; then finally to tell the whole long story, making each personage and every fact fall into its proper place so as to give unity and perspective to the whole. This most difficult task Gibbon triumphantly accomplished. Scholarship has made immense strides since his day, yet it is surprising how seldom he is caught in any serious error. The literary effect is superb. The work rises before us like a majestic Greek temple, firmly built upon a rock, strong, symmetrical, and beautiful.

The elements which went to make the *Decline and Fall* what it is, as Mr. Augustine Birrell has said, are "the noble conception, the shaping intellect, the mastered learning, the stately diction, and the daily toil." In the same essay Mr. Birrell says: "To praise Gibbon is not wholly superfluous; to commend his history would be so. It is now well on its second century. Time has not told upon it. It stands unaltered and with its authority unimpaired. It would be invidious to name the histories it has seen born and die. Its shortcomings have been pointed out—it is well; its inequalities exposed—that is fair; its style criticised—that is just. But it is still read. 'Whatever else is read,' says Professor Freeman, 'Gibbon must be.'"

Gibbon lived in an age of criticism, cold, sceptical, questioning. He shared the prevailing point of view to the full. His magnificent intellect sheds the most dazzling light; but it never warms. He traverses the ages with the

firm tread of one who is complete master of his material; but also with the sneer of the cynic, to whom the greatest men appear grotesquely small, and to whom the great movements that have swayed the hearts of nations appear to have been built largely upon delusions.

The weapon which Gibbon uses most frequently and successfully is irony. He lived in an age when it was still dangerous to cast doubt upon the miraculous element in the propagation of Christianity in the first three centuries. But what could not be done openly could be insinuated ironically. Indeed, wherever Gibbon has to deal with ecclesiastical affairs, an over-indulgence in this mocking tone mars the effect of the writing.

He belittled Christianity in particular. "The tone he thought fit to adopt towards Christianity," says Mr. Birrell, "was, quite apart from all particular considerations, a mistaken one. No man is big enough to speak slightingly of the construction his fellow-men have from time to time put upon the Infinite. And conduct which in a philosopher is ill-judged, is in an historian ridiculous. Gibbon's sneers could not alter the fact that his History, which he elected to style the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, might equally well, as Dean Stanley has observed, have been called the 'Rise and Progress of the Christian Church.' . . . We have Cardinal Newman's authority for the assertion that Gibbon is the only Church historian worthy of the name who has written in English."

Gibbon's style falls short of the very highest. He is always dignified; but, at his worst, he is affected and pompous. His diction, though less satirised than that of his friend Dr. Johnson, is far less pure than that of Goldsmith or of Burke. He is not an author from whom it is easy to quote short passages; the following sentences give some slight idea of the stately flow of his narrative:

The martial and ambitious spirit of Trajan formed a very singular contrast with the moderation of his successor. The restless activity of Hadrian was not less remarkable when compared with the gentle repose of Antoninus Pius. The life of the former was almost a perpetual journey; and as he possessed the various talents of the soldier, the statesman, and the scholar, he gratified his curiosity in the discharge of his duty. Careless of the differences of season and of climates, he marched on foot, and bare-headed, over the snows of Caledonia, and in the sultry plains of the Upper

Egypt; nor was there a province of the empire which, in the course of his reign, was not honoured with the presence of the monarch.

The following description of Mahomet is from the *Decline and Fall*:

According to the tradition of his companions, Mahomet was distinguished by the beauty of his person—an outward gift which is seldom despised, except by those to whom it has been refused. Before he spoke, the orator engaged on his side the affections of a public or private audience. They applauded his commanding presence, his majestic aspect, his piercing eye, his gracious smile, his flowing beard, his countenance that painted every sensation of the soul, and his gestures that enforced each expression of the tongue. In the familiar offices of life he scrupulously adhered to the grave and ceremonious politeness of his country: his respectful attention to the rich and powerful was dignified by his condescension and affability to the poorest citizens of Mecca: the frankness of his manner concealed the artifice of his views; and the habits of courtesy were imputed to personal friendship or universal benevolence. His memory was capacious and retentive, his wit easy and social, his imagination sublime, his judgment clear, rapid, and decisive. He possessed the courage both of thought and action; and although his designs might gradually expand with his success, the first idea which he entertained of his divine mission bears the stamp of an original and superior genius.

The son of Abdallah was educated in the bosom of the noblest race, in the use of the purest dialect of Arabia; and the fluency of his speech was corrected and enhanced by the practice of discreet and seasonable silence. With these powers of eloquence, Mahomet was an illiterate barbarian; his youth had never been instructed in the arts of reading and writing; the common ignorance exempted him from shame or reproach, but he was reduced to a narrow circle of existence, and deprived of those faithful mirrors which reflect to our mind the minds of sages and heroes. Yet the book of nature and of man was open to his view; and some fancy has been indulged in the political and philosophical observations which are ascribed to the Arabian traveller. He compares the nations and religions of the earth; discovers the weakness of the Persian and Roman monarchies; beholds with pity and indignation the degeneracy of the times; and resolves to unite, under one God and one king, the invincible spirit and primitive virtues of the Arabs. Our more accurate inquiry will suggest, that instead of visiting the courts, the camps, the temples of the east, the two journeys of Mahomet into Syria were confined to the fairs of Bostra and Damascus; that he was only thirteen years of age when he accompanied the caravan of his uncle, and that his duty compelled him to return as soon as he had disposed of the merchandise of Cadijah. In these hasty and superficial excursions, the eyes of genius might discern some objects invisible to his grosser companions; some seeds of knowledge might be cast upon a fruitful soil; but his ignorance of the Syriac language must have checked his curiosity, and I cannot perceive in the life or writings of Mahomet that his prospect was far extended beyond the limits of the Arabian world. From every

region of that solitary world the pilgrims of Mecca were annually assembled, by the calls of devotion and commerce; in the free concourse of multitudes, a simple citizen, in his native tongue, might study the political state and character of the tribes, the theory and practice of the Jews and Christians. Some useful strangers might be tempted or forced to implore the rites of hospitality; and the enemies of Mahomet have named the Jew, the Persian, and the Syrian monk, whom they accuse of lending their secret aid to the composition of the Koran. Conversation enriches the understanding, but solitude is the school of genius; and the uniformity of a work denotes the hand of a single artist. From his earliest youth Mahomet was addicted to religious contemplation: each year, during the month of Ramadan, he withdrew from the world and from the arms of Cadijah: in the cave of Hera, three miles from Mecca, he consulted the spirit of fraud or enthusiasm, whose abode is not in the heavens but in the mind of the prophet. The faith which, under the name of Islam, he preached to his family and nation, is compounded of an eternal truth and a necessary fiction—that there is only one God, and that Mahomet is the apostle of God.

"His effect," as Professor Saintsbury expresses it, "lies mainly in a peculiar roll of sentence, conducted throughout with a wavelike movement, and ending with a sound so arranged as to echo over the interval of sense and breath till the next is well on its way."

From the literary standpoint Gibbon's interesting *Autobiography* is the most important of his writings, but it has been completely overshadowed by the seven massive volumes of the *Decline and Fall*, the first volume of which appeared in 1776 and the last in 1788. He died suddenly in London on January 16, 1794.

Gibbon was a man of a calm and cool temperament. He was vain and affected in his manners, but a brilliant conversationalist. "It has been wittily said of him that he came at last to believe that he was the Roman Empire, or, at all events, something equally majestic and imposing."

## § 3

### HORACE WALPOLE

As Gibbon represents the detached and dignified scepticism of the eighteenth century, so Horace Walpole is the supreme English example of its artificiality and its joy in the things that do not matter. Horace Walpole's letters are one of

the most illuminative documents of the century. Lord Chesterfield's famous letters to his son are also a revelation of the mind of his time, as are, to a lesser extent, the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

Among other notable prose-writers of the period are David Hume, the historian, Adam Smith, the economist and author of *Wealth of Nations*, and Jeremy Bentham, the political philosopher, who, in what was eminently an age of reason, carried on the great English philosophical tradition derived from Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke.

James Boswell, to whom we owe the greatest and most entertaining biography in our literature, perhaps in any literature, survived his great master and subject, Dr. Johnson, by eleven years. Born at Auchinleck, in Ayrshire, he came of an old Scottish legal family and was himself a prospective lawyer at the Scottish Bar. But for Boswell the world was "full of a number of things," and it is difficult to conceive that he could ever have toiled to success in the law. He had a genius for being interested, and an insatiable appetite for general information and lively human intercourse. Johnson summed up a great deal of Boswell when he described him as "the best travelling companion in the world." He was enjoyable because he enjoyed, and interesting because he was interested. This is the only reasonable explanation of his extraordinary triumph as a biographer. His self-indulgence, his vanity, his often foolish candour, and his lust for notoriety do not count much against his alertness of observation, his boundless good-humour, and his enviable self-satisfaction.

Even at twenty Boswell yearned for London and important acquaintance in the literary world. It was in his second visit to London, at twenty-three, that he realised his consuming ambition to meet the Dictator. His introducer was Tom Davies, the bookseller, and the scene was the back parlour of Davies's shop in Russell Street, Covent Garden, and the date—the most memorable in Boswell's life—was May 16, 1763, when Johnson was aged fifty-four. Boswell describes what happened with his usual frankness:

> At last, on Monday the 16th of May, when I was sitting in Mr. Davies's back parlour, after having drunk tea with him and Mrs. Davies, Johnson unexpectedly came into the shop. Mr. Davies, having perceived him

through the glass door in the room in which we were sitting, advancing towards us, he announced his awful approach to me, somewhat in the manner of an actor in the part of Horatio, when he addresses Hamlet on the appearance of his father's ghost, " Look, my lord, it comes."

Thenceforward with interruptions due to Boswell's intermittent legal studies, his eccentric travels, his marriage and return to Scotland, the two were constantly together. Johnson's intimates soon observed the alliance and were inclined to resent it. " Who is this Scotch cur at Johnson's heels ? " someone asked. " He is not a cur," replied Goldsmith, " he is only a bur. Tom Davies flung him at Johnson in sport and he has the faculty of sticking." Johnson, it was, who forced his election to the Literary Club. It was Boswell, on the other hand, who forced Johnson by sheer cajolery and not a little plotting into his tour through Scotland and the Hebrides. Throughout Johnson thoroughly understood that he was being " boswellised " by Boswell ; indeed, he encouraged him in his task.

The true merit and wonder of Boswell's great work lies in a blend of sympathy, imaginative insight, and enterprise which was peculiarly his own and which has never been equalled since.

Boswell always keeps his eye on the object, is never wandering or tedious, and his style is unaffected and clear. He fairly took charge of his subject and resolved to present it truthfully. To Hannah More, who begged him to soften his portrait, he replied, " I will not make my tiger a cat to please anybody."

After Johnson's death, in 1784, Boswell sat down to write his *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* It had a mixed reception ; caricaturists and critics found plenty of material in it for their wit, Horace Walpole calling it " the story of a mountebank and his zany." But the *Tour* is of the very stuff of the *Life*. The *Life* itself appeared in May 1791, and despite much criticism became immediately popular. The first edition (of 1700 copies) was followed by a second in 1793.

In 1789 Boswell had lost his wife, and thereafter his life became more and more irregular. He died in London after a short illness, May 19, 1795.

§ 4

No contrast could be more striking than that between Izaak Walton and the next of the great English country writers, Gilbert White. Born in the village of Selborne in Hampshire, in 1720, it was not until sixty-eight years later that he published the little book which was to make his birthplace famous. Socially and culturally, Gilbert White typified the educated gentleman of the eighteenth century. He was a fellow of his college, and settled down, unmarried, to the duties of a country clergyman in his native place. When he began, in 1767, to write his *Natural History of Selborne*, in the form of personal letters to a naturalist of his acquaintance, he had not the slightest idea of its ever appearing in printed form. To this, undoubtedly, much of the quiet charm of the book is due; for no book of equal repute can compete with it in unaffectedness and unforced simplicity of manner.

It is the very first book to present the facts of natural history, free from the Latin and the pedantry, to say nothing of the legendary traditions, with which all previous writings on the subject had been loaded. It is completely free from unicorns of every kind; the birds and animals with which it deals being as homely and familiar as was the author. The *Natural History of Selborne* has none of the passion which infuses all the work of Richard Jefferies or of the philosophising which marks the work of Thoreau. Nor has it much of the poetry or romance so characteristic of Walton's *Compleat Angler*. Placid, serene, scholarly, and leisurely, it is definitely a pedestrian book, yet one with a dignified step. One is not at all surprised to learn that its author might often be observed on his walks taking a cloth from his pocket and flicking the dust from his boots. This note of particularity runs through the whole volume. It is observation and reflection that lends interest and charm to the whole of this celebrated book.

§ 5

There is one other writer who, by the mystery attending his person probably as much as by his literary efforts, has attracted considerable attention.

In the columns of the *Public Advertiser* from January 21, 1769, to January 21, 1772, there appeared a series of open letters, violently attacking the King and the Government of the Duke of Grafton, which live in literary history as the *Letters of Junius*. The identity of the writer was for many years a matter of speculation, and, among other people, they were attributed to Burke, Chatham, Wilkes, Chesterfield, Horne Tooke, Horace Walpole, and Gibbon. There is, however, no reasonable doubt that they were the work of Sir Philip Francis, a freakish politician, who fought a duel in India with Warren Hastings, was concerned in a notorious divorce action, and supported Wilberforce in his crusade against the slave trade. Junius was a superficial politician, but the vividness and vehemence of his invective make it almost comparable to Swift's, and there is no other political writing in English literature after his time that has the same forcefulness, except the famous *Runnymede Letters*, written by Disraeli.

The characteristics of the *Junius Letters* have been summed up by Professor Saintsbury. "An affectation of exaggerated moral indignation, claptrap rhetorical interrogations, the use, clever enough if it were not so constant, of balanced antitheses, a very good ear for some, though by no means many, cadences and rhythms, some ingenuity in trope and metaphor, and a cunning adaptation of that trick of specialising with proper names with which Lord Macaulay has surfeited readers for the last half-century—these, though by no means all, are the chief features of the Junian method."

The following extract from a letter addressed to the Duke of Grafton with its insinuated attack on George III is characteristic of the method and the style of Junius :

With any other prince, the shameful desertion of him in the midst of that distress, which you alone had created, in the very crisis of danger, when he fancied he saw the throne already surrounded by men of virtue and abilities, would have outweighed the memory of your former services. But his Majesty is full of justice, and understands the doctrine of compensations; he remembers with gratitude how soon you had accommodated your morals to the necessities of his service, how cheerfully you had abandoned the engagements of private friendship, and renounced the most solemn professions to the public. The sacrifice of Lord Chatham was not lost on him. Even the cowardice and perfidy of deserting him

may have done you no disservice in his esteem. The instance was painful, but the principle might please.

Sir Philip Francis died in 1818.

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# XXII

# ROBERT BURNS

## § 1

### ROBERT BURNS

THERE is, in the tiny village of Alloway, about two miles from the town of Ayr, a two-roomed cottage, in which, on the 25th of January 1759, Robert Burns was born. Local scepticism as to the authentic " clay biggin' " having survived so long has never been seriously regarded by the poet's biographers, and this humble dwelling, preserving, no doubt somewhat artfully, every feature of the peasant domesticity of eighteenth-century Scotland, is a national shrine which for several generations has attracted not only fervent Scots but notable visitors from many and far-distant parts of the world.

The poet's father, William Burnes or Burness (for so alternately he spelled his name) had been a labouring gardener near Edinburgh, and came to Ayrshire as gardener and overseer to a gentleman of small estate on the banks of the Doon. He leased, from another proprietor, a few acres of his own, and married Agnes Brown, who, though she had no education in the conventional sense of the term, was a woman of bright intelligence, with that oral culture in tale, tradition, and poetry not uncommon in the country-women of her period. From his mother, it is generally assumed, Robert Burns, the eldest of a family of seven, took his temperament, his fancy, and imagination. He was, in features, philosophy, and character, a very different type of man from his father, who, however, had a marked and admirable individuality of his own.

Of professional teaching, Robert Burns, in truth, had but a limited and erratic experience. His father and a few neighbouring householders engaged between them for two

years a young itinerant teacher for the tuition of their children, and on this excellent dominie's removal elsewhere the father himself taught the boy at home. A precocious passion for reading was evoked; Pope's works and a collection of letters by the best prose-writers of Queen Anne's time set young Burns assiduously scribbling at the age of twelve. At thirteen he went for a few weeks to a school in Dalrymple to improve his penmanship; at fourteen a like brief period was spent with his first tutor, in Ayr, in the study of English, French (which in course of time he could read with some facility), and Latin, in which he never got beyond the rudiments. At seventeen he attended a school at Kirkoswald for the study of mensuration, and the few months spent there completed all the orthodox education he was ever to have.

Its spasmodic character was unavoidably due to the straitened circumstances of the Burnes family. Ill-fortune attended every effort of William Burnes to improve his social condition; having left the Alloway cottage and croft to lease, in succession, the farms of Mount Oliphant and Lochlea, he failed with both, and in 1784 died of consumption.

Anticipating the failure with Lochlea, Robert and his brother Gilbert, three months before their father's death, took the farm of Mossgiel, which was stocked with the individual savings of the whole family, who wrought upon its cold and grudging acres for four years, during which the two brothers allowed themselves each only £7 per annum of wages.

If Mossgiel gave a wretched return to husbandry it was fertile enough in poetry. Burns was now twenty-five years of age. For ten years, in his hours of remission from hard manual labour on his father's holdings, he had read widely and wisely. He had shone in the rustic debates of young men's "mutual improvement" societies, had been shedding his native shyness and gaucherie at masonic gatherings and village dances; had gained self-assurance from manifold opportunities for pitting his native wit and logic against the academic dogmas of many social superiors. From early manhood he had manifestly been an idealist and a sentimentalist, acutely responsive to feminine charms, and his

first verses were a tribute at fifteen years of age to a girl whose singing in the harvest field had enraptured him. A second platonic charmer, when he was but seventeen, had "overset his trigonometry and sent him off from his studies at a tangent." At twenty-two he was more genuinely in love with Alison Begbie, a servant-maid on a neighbouring farm; wrote three poems to her, proposed to marry her, and was rejected.

The heroine of "Sweet Afton" is supposed to have been Mary Campbell, the poet's "Highland Mary."

Flow gently, sweet Afton! among thy green braes;
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock-dove whose echo resounds thro' the glen,
Ye wild whistling blackbirds, in yon thorny den,
Thou green-crested lapwing, thy screaming forbear;
I charge you, disturb not my slumbering Fair.

To the untimely death of Mary Campbell we owe his "Address to Mary in Heaven," written on the third anniversary of her death. The poet's wife noticed that towards the darkening he grew sad and wandered into the barnyard, "where his Jean found him lying on some straw with his eyes fixed on a shining star. Immediately on entering the house he sat down and wrote the lines, 'To Mary in Heaven,' and gave them to his wife."

Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,
  That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher'st in the day
  My Mary from my soul was torn.
O Mary! dear departed shade!
  Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
  Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

That sacred hour can I forget,
  Can I forget the hallow'd grove,
Where, by the winding Ayr, we met,
  To live one day of parting love!
Eternity can not efface
  Those records dear of transports past,
Thy image at our last embrace,
  Ah! little thought we 'twas our last!

The well-known plaintive song, "The Banks o' Doon," was suggested by an unhappy love affair which, however, was not one of the poet's own.

Ye banks and braes o' bonie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary, fu' o' care?
Thou'lt break my heart, thou warbling bird,
That wantons thro' the flowering thorn:
Thou mindst me o' departed joys,
Departed never to return.

Aft hae I rov'd by bonie Doon,
To see the rose and woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its Luve,
And fondly sae did I o' mine;
Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree!
And my fause Luver staw my rose,
But ah! he left the thorn wi' me.

His local renown, however, began with no love-lyrics, naturally not for general circulation, but with satirical onslaughts upon the Calvinistic bigotry which at the time, not in Ayrshire only, but all over Scotland, denied to the faithful the very elements of culture and intellectual freedom, and set the country half-mad with polemical controversies.

"The first of my poetic offspring that saw the light," wrote Burns in after years, "was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my 'Holy Fair.'" This was "The Holy Tulzie" or "Twa Herds," a daring enough intrusion on the sacred precincts of the Kirk, but being purely personal in its application it was not as irritant in its effect as the satire which followed—"Holy Willie's Prayer"—in which, while one real man alone was pilloried, he was obviously portrayed, in all his pietistic hypocrisy, as typical of a class which too often ruled the Kirk Sessions. The dovecots of the Kirk were ruffled even more by "The Holy Fair" which followed—a Teniers-like depictation of unseemly features attending the rustic festival to which the annual celebration of the Lord's Supper had, in certain parishes, degenerated.

Lockhart, in his incomparably fine *Life of Burns*, would seem to deplore the ruthless irreverence with which the poet dealt with those ugly aspects of life among the orthodox about him. But Lockhart was a son of the manse, to that extent prejudiced against its criticism, and not yet far enough removed from the period of which Burns wrote to recognise, as Scotland universally does to-day, that the poet in truth was doing the Christian Church, though rudely, a cleansing service.

Burns, essentially, was a man of religious temperament, which does not always imply perfect Christian practice. Atheism, and a materialistic conception of the universe, seem never to have entered into his mind; and piety manifest in humility and tenderness, in upright walk and earnest conversation, in the Covenanters' martyrdom, or the devotion of family worship, in him found always chords responsive. "That the same man should have produced 'The Cottar's Saturday Night' and the 'Holy Fair' about the same time will ever continue to move wonder and regret," says Lockhart, whose assurance on this point looks curiously ill-founded to-day.

It was, without question, an unorthodox and fairly free-living section of the Ayrshire bourgeoisie which most applauded these early satires of the poet, and included the closest of his friends. It was probably as the mordant critic of the "unco' guid" they understood him best, and laid the foundation of his renown; other aspects of Burns could only have appeared to them, if at all with approval, when he published his first book.

§ 2

In 1786, when he was twenty-seven years of age, convinced that Mossgiel could at its best give only a meagre substance to so large a family, Burns decided to abandon the plough and try his fortune in the West Indies, where many of his countrymen were plantation managers. A post was secured for him, but he had not sufficient money to pay his passage to Jamaica, and to secure this he set about publishing his first book from the press of a Kilmarnock printer. Three hundred subscribers were got, and an

edition of six hundred copies was printed and sold at three shillings. Copies of this Kilmarnock edition have, in recent times, sold at remarkable prices; in one case at least at £1000. Burns from the entire sales made about £20, with which he was by no means ill-satisfied.

In this Kilmarnock edition, almost every literary faculty of the poet was manifest; had it never had a successor it would have been sufficient to secure his permanent reputation in Scotland as a real bardic singer in the authentic national tradition. It was unmistakably a work of genius, of extraordinary technical accomplishment, and brilliant enough to warrant all the applause it met with. There was in it not only far more vital human stuff than in any Scottish poet who had gone before him, but a fresh spirit peculiarly acceptable to his times.

There was much of a journalist in Burns's composition (indeed, he was once offered a journalistic post in London !), and his lighter verse, like much of Byron and Pope, was topical, for its appeal depending on the whims, events, and passions of the hour.

What charmed his compatriots most in the Kilmarnock edition, there is no question, was his outspokenness, which spared no social sham, no political injustice, derided the pompous "elected person," proclaimed the dignity of the humblest kind of labour, shot thunderbolts of sly invective and idealism across a landscape sombre with superstitions social and ecclesiastic.

Is there for honest Poverty
  That hings his head, an' a' that;
The coward slave—we pass him by,
  We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, an' a' that,
  Our toils obscure an' a' that,
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
  The Man's the gowd for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine,
  Wear hoddin grey, an' a' that;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
  A Man's a Man for a' that:
For a' that, an' a' that,
  Their tinsel show, an' a' that;
The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
  Is king o' men for a' that.

There are but a few lyrics in the Kilmarnock edition, and these are far from his best in that field—the bulk of the book is made up of fearlessly heterodox lampoons, bacchic poems on Scots drink, pawky and witty rhymed epistles to his friends wherein all his young, wild, gallant philosophy of life came out in terms deliciously frank and native—the confidences of a fine fellow in a warm expansive hour; thoughts humane and tender of sheep, and mice, and old mares and daisies.

The wider fame of the poet was established instantly by this collection of his verse, most of it written in a few winter months in Mossgiel; he was no longer singer of a parish, but Caledonian Bard. There were in it poems which in their vein, for spontaneity, gusto, and sheer native inspiration, he was never to surpass — "The Twa Dogs," "Address to the Deil," "Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie," "The Auld Farmer's Salutation to his Auld Mare Maggie," "Scotch Drink," "To a Mouse," "To a Mountain Daisy."

Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flow'r,
Thou'st met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem:
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonie gem.

. . . . . .

The flaunting flow'rs our gardens yield,
High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield;
But thou, beneath the random bield
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie stibble field,
Unseen, alane.

"Hallowe'en" was the happiest and most observant and humorous description of old superstitious revels.

Not all of Burns's finished manuscripts figured in the Kilmarnock edition; it was apparently a judicious and representative selection from a much larger body of accomplished verse already executed, and left out, for example, the "Cantata" called "The Jolly Beggars," that "puissant and splendid production," as Matthew Arnold called it, wherein old gangrel life and character, studied in a Mauchline

tavern, found expression in a sequence of songs, dramatic, humorous, descriptive, all composed in moments of true lyrical elation.

The success of the Kilmarnock edition put an end to the poet's project of emigration. For the preparation of a new edition (his Kilmarnock publisher would not risk a second), he was induced to go to Edinburgh, where his fame had preceded him. For six months he lodged in the Scottish capital in very humble quarters with an old Ayrshire friend, and found himself the lion of a season in a society then really metropolitan, comprising a genuine aristocracy of lineage and intellect. A robust figure, 5 ft. 10 in. in height, with a slight stoop, due doubtless to years of toil in the plough-stilts; dark-haired, with keen black glowing eyes such as Walter Scott declared he had never seen in any other person; his conversation free, unaffected, ever interesting; his dress "midway between the holiday costume of a farmer and that of the company with which he now associated"—Burns got Edinburgh's complete approval.

An association of the most distinguished members of the northern aristocracy—the Caledonian Hunt—handsomely subscribed to his second edition, which brought him about four hundred pounds.

It may be surmised, however, that for Edinburgh his *éclat* was that of the rustic prodigy, with little conception that his name and fame would long outlive those of the most notable men who patronised him. No serious attempt was made by anyone in the literary and fashionable coteries to rescue this young man of rare and obvious genius from a condition of life so incongruous with his gifts and his accomplishments. He returned to Mossgiel and Jean Armour, who had borne him twins some months before, and whom in the following year he married—a partner from whom till the day of his death he doubtless got more domestic happiness than he could have got from Mrs. Maclehose, the Edinburgh grass-widow, to whose "Clarinda" he played "Sylvander" in a correspondence which, in its style and insincerity, showed that the influence of the epistolary art of the period of Queen Anne was anything but salutary.

It was during the honeymoon that Burns wrote "Of a'



*Photo: Rischgitz Collection.*

THE MEETING OF BURNS AND SCOTT, IN SCIENNES HOUSE, EDINBURGH, THE RESIDENCE OF PROFESSOR ADAM FERGUSON, IN THE WINTER OF 1786, AFTER THE PUBLICATION OF THE KILMARNOCK EDITION OF HIS POEMS.

Scott was then a boy of fifteen, and years later wrote of the fire and beauty of Burns's eyes.

the Airts the Wind can Blaw," out of compliment to his wife :

Of a' the airts the wind can blaw,
I dearly like the west,
For there the bonie lassie lives,
The lassie I lo'e best :
There's wild-woods grow, and rivers row,
And mony a hill between :
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever wi' my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flowers,
I see her sweet and fair :
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
I hear her charm the air :
There's not a bonie flower that springs,
By fountain, shaw, or green ;
There's not a bonie bird that sings,
But minds me o' my Jean.

With his Jean he took a farm at Ellisland in Dumfriesshire, on the banks of the Nith, delightfully situated—but a poet's selection rather than a shrewd farmer's. Here, among many other poems, which augmented his fame, he composed his famous " Tam o' Shanter," wherein are concentrated all the best natural qualities of his verse. It was first published in Edinburgh periodicals in 1791 ; after the Edinburgh second edition, indeed, Burns seemed content to disseminate his poems, or let his friends first print them, through such commercially unprofitable channels, or to send them gratis to compilers of song miscellanies. He regarded " Tam o' Shanter " as his best work, an estimate with which most discerning critics have agreed. It was written while he was still a farmer, though eking out his livelihood in the service of King George as a probationary " gauger " or exciseman. In 1791 he gave up his farm, became wholly an exciseman for a salary of £70 a year, and took up residence in Dumfries.

Dumfries itself was a town of taverns, and meridian drams, and rude *noctes ambrosianæ*, and Burns too readily fell into its dissipated habits. There is every reason to believe, however, that his disrepute on this account has been considerably exaggerated ; his work was always carefully and conscientiously done to the satisfaction of his superiors ; there was no suggestion of domestic unhappiness,

and his correspondence up till his latter days betrays no evidence of a mind distracted from a decent man's ideals and duties.

Burns died on 21st July 1796 as the result of rheumatic fever, just when an excise collectorship was in sight for him and "a life of literary leisure with a decent competence." He was only thirty-seven years of age. He had not long enough survived to see more than a mere fraction of his poetry in collected form, and after his "crowded hour of glorious life" in Edinburgh, there had been little beyond the encouragement of a few private correspondents to help his confidence in the permanent value of his work. The full extent of his achievement was far from being comprehended by his countrymen, though his death created a genuine sentiment of natural bereavement. He had, on his deathbed, playfully requested that the "awkward squad" of his Volunteer Company should not fire over his grave; incongruous military pomp attended his funeral, but the "awkward squad" whose blundering he could not anticipate was first manifest in his earliest biographers, Currie and Walker, who were influenced by every scrap of malicious gossip they could find regarding him.

§ 3

When the poems and songs of Burns, in their entirety, and a considerable body of his correspondence, were published after his death, the extraordinary nature of the man and the full scope of his poetical genius were for the first time manifest to the world. No English poet of his century questioned his claim to rank among the greatest of lyric singers, and Goethe pronounced him first of lyrists in virtue of the two hundred and fifty songs which he wrote or rescued from rags, squalor, and indecency to adorn and retransfigure.

This generous acceptance of the genius of Burns far beyond his own country was the more remarkable since understanding and appreciation must, in such cases, inevitably have been hampered by the Scots vernacular in which all the best of his work was written. That he could write impeccable and stylish English both in verse and prose is amply demonstrated, but he was unquestionably happiest

and at his best in his native language, whose use by him confirmed its magic power, as in the old Border Ballads (for which he cared so little), to evoke visions and emotions not so readily responsive to well-worn, too familiar English.

He was in the true line of descent, as a poet from Barbour and Dunbar and the old Scots "makaris" generally; yet his moods of emulation were roused by poets more modern —Fergusson and Ramsay, and many others much less well-known to fame. His favourite metrical measure was the *rime couée* of old Alexander Scott's "Complaint Aganis Cupid," revived by Sir Robert Sempill in "Habbie Simpson"; it is the stave of many of his poems, including the prophetic "Daisy."

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date;
Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives, elate,
Full on thy bloom,
Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight,
Shall be thy doom!

The same responsiveness to ancient Scots metrical airs is seen in his partiality for the refrain form of

Nae treasures, nor pleasures
Could make us happy lang;
The heart aye's the part aye
That makes us right or wrang—

a measure whereof Alexander Montgomerie is supposed to have been inventor in the sixteenth century in "The Bankis of Helicon" and "The Cherry and the Slae."

He was no Puritan yet; "though coarse he was never vulgar," as Byron put it, and, called upon by Thomson to provide songs for parlour audiences, he cleansed rude old ditties; sometimes in no more than a phrase or couplet found "the soul of good in all things evil," and re-created lyrics that express the purest love, the loftiest ecstasy. Yet unquestionably the best of his songs owe nothing to earlier models. Among these should be classified "Mary Morison":

O Mary, at thy window be,
It is the wish'd, the trysted hour!
Those smiles and glances let me see,
That make the miser's treasure poor!

How blythely wad I bide the stoure,
A weary slave frae sun to sun;
Could I the rich reward secure,
The lovely Mary Morison.

or,

O my luve is like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June;
O my luve is like the melodie
That's sweetly played in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luve am I;
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

or,

Ae fond kiss and then we sever;
Ae fareweel, alas, for ever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.

Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met—or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

In Burns's immediate predecessors, the old ballad atmosphere of romance was negligible or wholly absent, in spite of their preoccupation with Prince Charlie and the Jacobites. He, too, was Jacobite, when the wind of sentiment lay in that direction, though a man more unlikely to approve of the Stuarts as they actually were would be hard to find. Romance is best inspired, not by the contemplation of dynasties or heroic figures, but by conception of the mystic grandeur of simple acts and simple words and gestures in the great cruces of life. To these was the genius of Burns ever responsive, as in—

It was a' for our rightfu' king,
We left fair Scotland's strand;
It was a' for our rightfu' king,
We e'er saw Irish land, my dear,
We e'er saw Irish land.

Now a' is done that men can do,
And a' is done in vain;
My love and native land, fareweel!
For I maun cross the main, my dear;
For I maun cross the main.

He turned him right, and round about,
Upon the Irish shore,
And gae his bridle-reins a shake,
With Adieu for evermore, my dear;
With Adieu for evermore!

The lyric cry of such verse transcends mere incidents in history, and, without any associated historical ideas to help out its significance, finds its way to the human heart. So, too, one may be indifferent to the fate of a sheep-stealer, yet experience the same proud human solace as in Henley's "Captain of My Soul" in "Macpherson's Farewell":

Farewell, ye dungeons dark and strong,
The wretch's destinie!
Macpherson's time will not be long
On yonder gallows-tree.

Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,
Sae dauntingly gaed he;
He play'd a spring, and danc'd it round
Below the gallows-tree.

O what is death but parting breath?
On mony a bloody plain
I've dar'd his face, and in this place
I scorn him yet again.

Passionate love of country; genuine sympathy with all animate things; emotional response to Nature in every mood and aspect; revolt against anciently accepted bonds —religious, social, and political; fearless independence; a clairvoyant sense of all that is implied in racial sentiment; unaffected and masterly use of the vernacular speech, and the power to combine the loftiest reflections with true wit and humour—these are the qualities in Burns that put him first among all creative artists in the hearts of Scottish people. He is a nation's poet in the most rigid sense, *hors concours*, and without any prospect of a successor. No Scotsman—even in the Gaelic highlands, for which Burns never wrote—can escape coming under his influence even to-day, when the vulgarity of the music-halls comes quickly to the remotest glens. The Ayrshire poet did not fulfil the magnificent promise of that first Kilmarnock book, but in his later phase as songster he produced undying lyrics that took the heart of the world by storm.

We may fitly conclude this short survey by quoting a tribute from Carlyle's famous essay:

"If we take into account the immense variety of his subjects; how, from the loud flowing revel in 'Willie brew'd a Peck o' Maut,' to the still, rapt enthusiasm of sadness of 'Mary in Heaven'; from the glad kind greeting of 'Auld Langsyne,' or the comic archness of 'Duncan Gray,' to the fire-eyed fury of 'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,' he has found a tone and words for every mood of man's heart,—it will seem a small praise if we rank him as the first of all our Song-writers; for we know not where to find one worthy of being second to him. . . .

"His Songs are already part of the mother-tongue, not of Scotland only, but of Britain, and of the millions that in all ends of the earth speak a British language. In hut and hall, as the heart unfolds itself in many-coloured joy and woe of existence, the *name*, the *voice* of that joy and that woe, is the name and voice which Burns has given them. Strictly speaking, perhaps no British man has so deeply affected the thoughts and feelings of so many men, as this solitary and altogether private individual, with means apparently the humblest."

## § 4

### JAMES HOGG

James Hogg, "the Ettrick Shepherd," mainly owes his place among the poets of his country as the author of "The Queen's Wake." The greater part of his work, however, is of second or third merit. Hogg was first a shepherd and then a sheep farmer among the hills of Ettrick and Yarrow.

The following note in Hogg's *Autobiography* is interesting. He had just heard of the death of Robert Burns: "Every day I pondered on the genius and fate of Burns. I wept, and always thought with myself—what is to hinder me from succeeding Burns? I, too, was born on the 25th of January, and I have much more time to read and compose than any ploughman could have, and can sing more old songs than ever ploughman could in the world. But then I wept again

because I could not write. However, I resolved to be a poet, and to follow in the steps of Burns. . . ."

Hogg's association with Sir Walter Scott in collecting material for the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* spurred him to imitation of the old work, and it seems more than likely that he put matter of his own into the *Minstrelsy*.

His school education was of a meagre kind ; indeed, Hogg has said that although he composed with ease he found the actual writing out of his composition a difficult task, as he had forgotten the little of the art of writing that he had ever learned. He practised writing, however, on the hill-side, scratching the letters on large slate stones. Among his best work is " Kilmeny," the Thirteenth Bard's song from " The Queen's Wake."

Bonnie Kilmeny gaed up the glen ;
But it wasna to meet Duneira's men,
Nor the rosy monk of the isle to see,
For Kilmeny was pure as pure could be.
It was only to hear the yorlin sing,
And pu' the cress-flower round the spring,
The scarlet hypp and the hind-berrye,
And the nut that hung frae the hazel tree ;
For Kilmeny was pure as pure could be.
But lang may her minny look o'er the wa' ;
And lang may she seek i' the greenwood shaw ;
Lang the laird o' Duneira blame,
And lang, lang greet or Kilmeny come hame !

. . . . . .

Kilmeny looked up with a lovely grace,
But nae smile was seen on Kilmeny's face,
As still was her look, and as still was her ee,
As the stillness that lay on the emerant lea,
Or the mist that sleeps on a waveless sea.
For Kilmeny had been she knew not where,
And Kilmeny had seen what she could not declare,
Kilmeny had been where the cock never crew,
Where the rain never fell and the wind never blew,
But it seemed as the harp of the sky had rung,
And the airs of heaven played round her tongue
When she spoke of the lovely forms she had seen,
And a land where sin had never been.

This story of the fairy-captured Kilmeny is sheer magic.

Hogg was a lyrical poet of fine grain. Everyone knows his "Skylark":

Bird of the wilderness,
Blithesome and cumberless,
Sweet be thy matin o'er moorland and lea!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place—
Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!

Wild is thy lay and loud,
Far in the downy cloud,
Love gives it energy, love gave it birth.
Where, on thy dewy wing,
Where art thou journeying?
Thy lay is in heaven, thy love is on earth.

O'er fell and fountain sheen,
O'er moor and mountain green,
O'er the red streamer that heralds the day,
Over the cloudlet dim,
Over the rainbow's rim,
Musical cherub, soar, singing, away!

Then, when the gloaming comes,
Low in the heather blooms
Sweet will thy welcome and bed of love be!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place—
Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!

"To the Comet of 1811" is less familiar:

Oh, on thy rapid prow to glide!
To sail the boundless skies with thee,
And plough the twinkling stars aside,
Like foam-bells on a tranquil sea!

To brush the embers from the sun,
The icicles from off the pole,
Then far to other systems run,
Where other moons and planets roll!

Several of Hogg's songs of a national character maintain a great popularity, such as "Cam' ye by Athol," "Flora Macdonald's Farewell," and "Come o'er the Stream, Charlie." Hogg died in 1835 and was buried in Ettrick Churchyard, where rest his shepherd ancestors.

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# XXIII

# THE LITERATURE THAT MADE THE REVOLUTION

## § 1

### VOLTAIRE

GENERALLY, it may be said that during the long reign of Louis XV, who had all his great-grandfather's vices, and none of his qualities of dignity and statesmanship, France was miserably misgoverned and overtaxed. There was no justice for the poor, no freedom of speech, no efficiency in administration ; the nobility had lost its interest in letters, to a large extent the Church had abandoned its divine mission ; the armies were starved, with the consequence that the victories of the seventeenth century were followed by constant defeats in the eighteenth. It was in this atmosphere that the literature of revolt sprang into being. It began with Montesquieu, whose *Lettres Persanes* are a series of gay, light-hearted correspondence supposed to be written by Persian travellers in Paris, wittily describing the corruption of French life, and making serious suggestions for more satisfactory government.

Voltaire was five years younger than Montesquieu. His real name was François Arouet, and he was born in Paris in 1694. His father was a well-to-do notary, and he was educated by the Jesuits. His schooldays were tempestuous. One of his early exploits was to write a poem in which Moses was denounced as an impostor. He quarrelled with his father, and was introduced by his godfather into the dissipated society of Paris during the years that the Duke of Orleans was regent for Louis XV.

Voltaire began his literary career by writing satirical verses which landed him in the Bastille in 1716. He was imprisoned for a year. During the next six years he

travelled over half Europe, and in 1725 he was again in the Bastille, this time for challenging an obscure but influential duke with whom he had quarrelled. After another six months in prison Voltaire was ordered to leave Paris, and he landed in England in the middle of May 1726. Before this visit to England, which had a vital effect on his future work, Voltaire had written poetry which is nowadays never read, and melodramas that had nothing more than a topical value.

Eighteenth-century France regarded Voltaire's epic, the *Henriade*, as comparable to the achievements of Homer and Virgil; but Professor Saintsbury has well described it as "declamatory in tone, tedious in action, and commonplace in character." In England Voltaire met the Walpoles, Bolingbroke, Congreve, and Pope. He studied English life minutely. In his letters to France he described the manners of the Quakers, and the new inoculation against disease. He learned to read English easily, and he not only read Shakespeare, Dryden, and Swift, but he also studied Newton and Locke, the philosophic founder of democracy. He was immensely impressed with the freedom of thought that existed in England, and with the respect paid to men of letters.

Voltaire stayed in England for three years. Lord Morley has said: "He left France a poet, he returned to it a sage." His English letters were published soon after his return to Paris. His incidental criticisms of the established order in France and his contempt of orthodoxy caused a warrant to be issued for his arrest. This time he took refuge in Lorraine, where he spent most of his time until 1740, busy writing drama and poetry. In this year he had his first interview with Frederick the Great of Prussia, with whom he had already had a long correspondence. Five years later Voltaire began another short residence in Paris. Madame de Pompadour had become his friend, and through her influence he obtained the position of historiographer-royal, with a salary of two thousand livres a year. Louis XV, however, who was no fool, was never deceived by Voltaire's mock homage, and his Court favour was short-lived.

In 1751 Voltaire left Paris to make his famous stay with Frederick of Prussia in Berlin. Frederick, one of the most

unpleasant monarchs in history, delighted in attracting literary men to Potsdam, but their lot there was not a happy one. As Macaulay said : " The poorest author of that time in London sleeping on a bulk, dining in a cellar, with a cravat of paper, and a skewer for a fork, was a happier man than any of the literary inmates of Frederick's Court."

Voltaire was now fifty-seven. Great as was his reputation in his own country, he was unhappy and dissatisfied that his dramas were not considered equal to those of Corneille and Racine. In Berlin he believed he would find fuller appreciation. His reception was regal, but the friendship between the most powerful monarch in Europe and the greatest wit did not last very long. Frederick was frugal, Voltaire was greedy ; Frederick was arrogant, so was the Frenchman. On one occasion the king sent Voltaire some of his verses, asking him for corrections and criticism. " See," said Voltaire, " what a quantity of his dirty linen the king has sent me to wash."

Finally Voltaire fled from Prussia and settled in the Château Ferney, near Lake Geneva, which became his permanent home until the end of his life. He lived to be eighty-four. The most considerable of his writings during the latter part of his life was his famous novel *Candide*, in which, in the form of a diary of travel, Voltaire exposes the " sins and savagery of the times " with a sustained irony unmatched in literature, and with what Mr. A. B. Walkley has called an " impish glee."

Mr. Lytton Strachey says of Voltaire : " He was the most egotistical of mortals, and the most disinterested ; he was graspingly avaricious, and profusely generous ; he was treacherous, mischievous, frivolous, and mean ; yet he was a firm friend and a true benefactor, yet he was profoundly serious and inspired by the noblest enthusiasms."

Considering Voltaire as a writer, Lord Morley says : " Voltaire was a stupendous power, not only because his expression was incomparably lucid, or even because his sight was exquisitely keen and clear, but because he saw many new things, after which the spirits of others were unconsciously groping and dumbly yearning."

Voltaire is regarded in France as the most French of all their men of letters. His style is the French ideal of



*Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.*

VOLTAIRE.

Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

A clever and characteristic caricature in wax.

writing, clear yet coloured, strong and simple, always with the wittiest and lightest touch, yet rising with a noble subject into noble heights. To this style of his, forever modulating, every kind of literature came alike—histories, stories, letters, satires, epigrams. Above all, it lent itself to that supreme power of raillery which gained for him the name of the Great Mocker—raillery against the things he hated—priests, kings, tyrants, and oppressors; against the enemies of the things he fought for—God, love, pity,

liberty of thought and action, the right of every man to call his soul his own. It may be remarked that Voltaire, who is often called an atheist, passed his life in fighting the atheistic doctrines of most of his contemporaries, and that he built a church with the inscription "Dedicated by Voltaire to God." "No other church," he remarked, "is dedicated to God, but to the Saints. I prefer to serve the Master rather than the valets."

Voltaire may be called, with some propriety, the Swift of France. Like Swift, he mocked and railed; as with Swift, the vast bulk of his themes were but of passing interest and are now left unread; like Swift, his most enduring works are satires in the form of stories. *Gulliver's Travels* have their counterpart in *Candide* and *Zadig*. And it is probable that these will continue to be read, if but as masterpieces of story-telling, as long as the two languages endure.

In the slightest trifles of Voltaire, in writing or in conversation, his style comes flashing forth. The bust of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre was pronounced a speaking likeness. "Not speaking," said Voltaire, "or it would have said something silly." "I wish the Germans," he remarked on another occasion, "more wit and fewer consonants." He made the prettiest compliments and wrote the prettiest drawing-room verses of any poet of his time. Here is an example:

Last night in sleep I seemed a king,
  A crown of gold was mine,
And mine a more delightful thing—
  I loved a maid divine;
A maid, my darling, like to thee;
  And lo, when sleep had flown
The best of these he left to me—
  I only lost my throne!

This same light touch which he displayed in trifles comes out in his more serious work. One or two examples will suffice as well as many to convey an idea of the style which has given Voltaire his unique place in the world of letters.

In rescuing his lady, Semire, from a troop of brigands Zadig received an arrow near the eye. The wound was deep, an abscess formed, and the eye itself was threatened. Messengers were despatched to Memphis to fetch the celebrated doctor Hermes, who arrived in due course with a



*Photo : Rischgitz Collection,*

ROUGET DE L'ISLE SINGING "THE MARSEILLAISE."

After the painting by Pils in the Louvre, Paris.

train of servants. He paid a visit to the wounded man, and pronounced that he would lose his eye; he even predicted the exact day and hour when the sad event would happen. "If it had been the right eye," he declared, "I could have saved it; but wounds in the left eye are incurable." All Babylon, while they pitied Zadig, were filled with admiration of the doctor's wisdom. Two days later, the abscess broke of its own accord, and Zadig was as well as ever. The learned doctor wrote a book to prove that he had no business to recover and ought to have lost his eye.

Here is a passage which not only shows Voltaire as a story-teller at his best, but reveals the fact that he was a Sherlock Holmes born before his time.

One day when Zadig was walking near a little wood he saw the Queen's chief attendants and several officers running towards him. He noticed that they were in great anxiety, for they ran about as if they were quite bewildered, looking for something of great value which they had lost. When they came up to him the chief Eunuch said: "Have you seen the Queen's pet dog?"

Zadig replied, "It is a little female dog."

"You are right," said the Eunuch.

"It is a very small spaniel," added Zadig; "she has recently had puppies, she has a limp of the left forefoot, and she has very long ears."

"You have seen her, then?" exclaimed the Eunuch joyfully.

"No," replied Zadig, "I have never seen her. I did not know that the Queen had such a dog."

Precisely at the same time, by an extraordinary coincidence, the most beautiful horse in the King's stable had escaped from the hands of the stable attendants and galloped out on the plains of Babylon. The Grand Vizier and all the other officers ran after it with as much anxiety as the first Eunuch after the spaniel. The Grand Vizier addressed himself to Zadig, and asked him if he had seen the King's horse pass. Zadig replied, "It is a horse which gallops to perfection; it is five feet high, with very small hoofs. It has a tail three and a half feet long; the bit of its bridle is of twenty-three-carat gold; its shoes are of silver."

"What road has it taken? Where is it?" demanded the Vizier.

"I have never seen it," replied Zadig, "and I have never heard it spoken of."

The Grand Vizier and the first Eunuch had no doubt that Zadig had stolen the King's horse and the Queen's dog. They had him conveyed before the Great Desterhan, who condemned him to the knout and to pass the rest of his days in Siberia. The judgment had scarcely been pronounced when the horse and the dog were found. The judges were under the sad necessity of reversing their judgment, but they condemned Zadig to pay four hundred ounces of gold for having said that he had never seen what he had seen. He was first obliged to pay this fine; after which he was permitted to plead his cause before the council of the Great Desterhan. He spoke in these terms:

"This is what happened to me. I was walking towards the little wood, where I lately encountered the venerable Eunuch and the most illustrious

Grand Vizier. I had seen on the sand the traces of an animal, and I had easily judged that they were those of a little dog. The light and the long furrows imprinted on the little eminences of the sand between the traces of the feet showed me that it was a female that had lately given birth to pups. Other traces which appeared to have continually raised the surface of the sand by the side of the front feet told me that she had long ears. As I remarked that the sand was always less crushed by one foot than by the three others, I understood that the dog of our august Queen was, if I may dare say so, a little lame.

"With regard to the King's horse, you must know that while I was walking in the roads of this wood I perceived the marks of the hoofs of a horse. They were all at equal distances. 'Here,' said I, 'is a horse which gallops perfectly.' The dust of the trees in a narrow route only seven feet broad was brushed off here and there, to right and left, at three and half feet from the middle of the road. 'This horse,' I added, 'has a tail of three and half feet long, which, by its movement right and left, has scattered the dust.' I had seen under the trees, which formed a canopy five feet high, newly fallen leaves from the branches, and I knew that this horse had touched them, and therefore it was five feet high. As to the bridle, it must be of twenty-three-carat gold, for it had rubbed its bit against a stone, and I had made the assay of it. I judged, finally, by the marks which its shoes had left on the pebbles of another kind, that it was shod with silver of a fineness of twelve deniers."

Perhaps, as time goes on, the Great Mocker will become more and more regarded as the Great Amuser.

## § 2

### DIDEROT AND THE ENCYCLOPÆDISTS

The new ideas, the new knowledge, the whole spirit of revolt against misgovernment and superstition, found expression in the pages of the famous *Encyclopædia*, the first volume of which was published in Paris in 1751 and the final volume in 1772. This great enterprise owed its existence to the energy and courage of Denis Diderot, who was born in 1713. Like Voltaire, he was educated by the Jesuits, and his varied literary life as playwright, novelist, and philosopher is second only in interest and importance to the careers of Voltaire and Rousseau.

The *Encyclopædia*, with which Diderot's name will always be connected, sprang from a publisher's suggestion that Diderot should prepare a French edition of Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopædia*. But it expanded far beyond such limits. It covers the whole area of human thought and

activity, emphasising the triumphs of Science and, to quote Lord Morley, asserting "the democratic doctrine that it is the common people in the nation whose lot ought to be the main concern of the nation's government." Diderot was assisted by a host of distinguished collaborators, the best known of whom were Buffon, the famous naturalist, and Voltaire. As to the manner in which this gigantic scheme was carried out, a letter of Voltaire's to Diderot is of peculiar interest: "Your work is a kind of tower of Babel: things that are good, bad, true, false, grave, and gay, are all jumbled up together. There are articles which seem written by a drawing-room dandy, others by a scullion in the kitchen. The reader is carried from the boldest flight of thought to platitudes that turn him sick."

The *Encyclopædia* naturally gave offence to the upholders of the old order, and the later volumes had to be produced clandestinely, and in constant fear of police interference, and at the end Diderot suffered the mortification of having all his proofs mutilated without his knowledge by a timorous printer.

The *Encyclopædia* was a great success, but Diderot's earnings from it averaged only a hundred and twenty pounds a year for twenty years. He was an apostle of knowledge. His disbelief in revealed religion was as thorough as Voltaire's and much more thorough than Rousseau's. He thought that the world could be saved by knowledge and virtue. He translated *Clarissa* into French, and he was largely responsible for the popularity of Richardson's novels in France in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Apart from the *Encyclopædia*, *Le Neveu de Rameau* is Diderot's greatest achievement. It is a satire on contemporary manners, written with abounding wit and a sort of bitter pity. Goethe translated it into German in 1805. Diderot was a critic both of the theatre and of pictures. Writing of his art criticism, Madame Necker, mother of Madame de Staël, said: "Before Diderot, I had never seen anything in pictures except dull and lifeless colours; it was his imagination that gave them relief and life, and it is almost a new sense for which I am indebted to his genius."

He was a man of considerable literary activity, a rapid

and careless writer, with independent and unconventional points of view. There has seldom been an author, says Professor Saintsbury, who was more fertile in ideas. "It is impossible to name a subject which Diderot has not treated, and hardly possible to name one on which he has not said striking and memorable things."

Although Diderot believed in little, he hoped for much although he was oppressed by the present, he had confidence in the future. He had something of the Rabelais optimism and joy in life.

In 1784, five years before the Revolution, *The Marriage of Figaro* by Pierre Augustin Caron, better known as Beaumarchais, was produced at the Théâtre Français. Beaumarchais was the son of a watchmaker, a happy-go-lucky literary adventurer, who made frequent visits to Spain and England, and played a considerable part in exciting French enthusiasm for American independence, incidentally making money through the transport of Lafayette's army to the United States. He lived until 1799, spending some of his later years in exile as a suspected traitor to the new French Republic. Years before the production of the *Marriage of Figaro*, Beaumarchais had won considerable fame as the author of *The Barber of Seville*, of which *Figaro* was the sequel. The *Marriage of Figaro* has a definite place in the literature that prepared the Revolution—Napoleon described it as "the Revolution in action."

## § 3

### JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose *Social Contract* has been described as the Bible of the Revolution, was born of Protestant parents at Geneva in 1712. Here we are concerned with Rousseau, as with Voltaire and Diderot, as a writer rather than as a philosopher, but since the value of literature depends on its relation to life the books that have vastly affected human history retain outstanding interest, particularly when the circumstances of the lives of the men who wrote them are as strange and arresting as the social atmosphere in which they were produced.

Rousseau is Voltaire's one rival. Voltaire belonged to the professional class and from his youth lived in the world of manners and breeding. Rousseau was the son of a watchmaker, and spent years of his early manhood as a vagabond, and had an infinitely greater personal knowledge of the human sufferings and limitations that finally brought down the Bourbon monarchy than Voltaire ever had. Voltaire, as Lord Morley said, stood for eighteenth-century "curiosity, irreverence, intrepidity, vivaciousness, and rationality." He was the high-priest of knowledge and art. Voltaire was a rationalist, Rousseau was a sentimentalist, dreading knowledge, and believing that if man was to be happy he must not press forward but journey backward to primitive simplicity.

Never did a great writer live such a strange life as Jean-Jacques Rousseau—as Carlyle called him, "virtuous Jean-Jacques, evangelist of the Contrat Social." He was first apprenticed to a notary, and then to an engraver. When he was sixteen he wandered away from home, professed conversion to the Roman Catholic faith, and became for a while a footman in Turin. Three years afterwards he settled down for a time, as "domestic lover" to the wealthy Madame de Warens at Annecy. Madame de Warens was a "kind of deist with a theory of libertinism tempered by good nature," who, among other things, paid for Rousseau to complete his education. Rousseau was a restless and ungracious lover, often wandering away from his benefactress, on one occasion attaching himself as secretary to a Greek archimandrite, on another teaching music, of which he knew very little, to a young lady. In 1741 Rousseau was in Paris endeavouring to persuade the Academy of Science to adopt a new system of musical notation which he had invented. Then he went to Venice as secretary to the French Ambassador, returning to Paris in 1745, associating with the literary group that centred round Diderot, and contributing to the *Encyclopædia*.

In 1749, when he was thirty-seven years old, he made his first literary success with an essay in which he developed his famous theory of the superiority of the savage over the civilised man. The essay was followed by the production of two plays, the success of which brought him a command

to go to Court—and this command he characteristically disobeyed. He went back to Geneva in 1754, and once there confessed himself a Protestant. Two years afterwards he was again in Paris writing *La Nouvelle Héloise*—a sentimental novel clearly suggested by Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe*—and incidentally quarrelling with Diderot. Rousseau had a genius for quarrelling. Soon after his break with Diderot he published a pamphlet attacking Voltaire. For ten years Rousseau lived in prosperity in the neighbourhood of Paris, and during this period, besides *La Nouvelle Héloise*, his writings included the famous *Social Contract*, and his second novel *Émile*, which brought on his head the anger both of the Court and of the Church. He was obliged hurriedly to leave France, going first to Switzerland and afterwards to Prussia, in neither of which countries he was made welcome. In 1766 he landed in England at the invitation of David Hume, Boswell escorting his wife from Paris. He soon tired of London's lionising, and stayed for some time in Wooton in Derbyshire, where he wrote a great part of his *Confessions*. Before the summer of 1767 he had quarrelled with Hume and was back again in Paris. He died in 1778, in the same year as Voltaire, having in his later years finished his *Confessions* and written his *Dialogues*. It seems probable that for the last ten years of his life Rousseau was not entirely sane. He was amazingly "touchy" and pitifully easily offended, having been born, as Hume said, "without a skin."

Most of our knowledge of Rousseau's private life has been learned from his own *Confessions*, in which with a candour unrivalled by anyone but Pepys, and without Pepys's ingenuous humour, he reveals himself without reticence or reservation. In 1743 he commenced his association with Thérèse la Vaseur, whom he married shortly before his death. She had been an inn servant, apparently without beauty, education, or intelligence, and was hopelessly vulgar and immoral. By her Rousseau had five children, all of whom, according to his own story, were consigned to the Foundling Hospital immediately after their birth.

There is little literary value either in *La Nouvelle Héloise* or in *Émile*. In the *Social Contract* Rousseau shows himself

the disciple of Locke. He insists that the two most valuable things in life are Liberty and Equality.

The opening words of his epoch-making work, *The Social Contract*, which, as Morley says, "sent such a thrill through the generations to which they were uttered in two continents," were these, "*Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.*" Rousseau knew hardly any history, or he would have realised that man has been born free in few ages of the world. But he knew just enough to search back for his ideal free birth to those far-away times before man was civilised, and was therefore presumably unaffected and natural. The theory of the *Social Contract* is that all government should be based on the consent of the governed. The people are the sovereign, and the will of the people must be carried out by an executive authority chosen by them. The State in the eighteenth century was the King. It should be the people, and the one duty of the State should be to look after and educate all its citizens. The *Social Contract* was the gospel of the Jacobins, and Saint-Just and Robespierre moulded their legislative decrees on Rousseau's teaching.

Rousseau's literary power appears at its fullest in his *Confessions*, the most famous and surprising autobiography in all literature. Rousseau is his own hero. He declares: "I have ever thought and still think myself, considering everything, the best of men." He cheerfully admits his vices, but he believes that there is no human being who does not "conceal some odious vice": comparatively he is an admirable individual, and he determines to reveal himself completely, believing that by showing himself in his true colours, less candid persons will feel that bad as he is they are really worse. Writing of the days in which he was apprenticed to a Geneva watchmaker, he says:

> Thus I learned to covet, dissemble, lie, and, at length, to steal, a propensity I never before felt the least inclination to, though since that time I have never been able entirely to divest myself of it. Unsatisfied desire led naturally to this vice, and this is the reason why pilfering is so common among footmen and apprentices, although the latter, as they grow up, and find themselves in a position where everything is at their command, lose this shameful propensity.

Though he is entirely pleased with himself, Rousseau is

not given to vain boasting—he never exaggerates his skill as a musician, for example—and the self-revelation is fascinating because it is obviously sincere.

> My passions are extremely violent; while under their influence, nothing can equal my impetuosity. I am then an absolute stranger to discretion or decorum. I am rude, violent, and daring: no shame can stop, no danger intimidate me. My mind is frequently so engrossed by a single object, that beyond it the whole world is not worth a thought. I am all enthusiasm at one instant, and the next I am plunged into a state of despair. In my more temperate moments I am indolent and timid, and it becomes an intolerable labour for me to say or do anything.

One of the charms in the *Confessions* is the incidental descriptions of scenery and the often expressed joy in natural beauty. Love of Nature had before been expressed in poetry, but it was a new note not only in French prose but in the prose literature of Europe.

Rousseau has been well described by Professor Saintsbury as " A describer of the passions of the human heart and of the beauties of Nature. . . . He was the direct inspirer of the men who made the French Revolution, and the theories of his *Contrat Social* were closer at the root of Jacobin politics than any other. His fervid declamation about equality and brotherhood, and his sentimental republicanism, were seed as well suited to the soil in which they were sown as Montesquieu's reasoned constitutionalism was unsuited to it."

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# XXIV

# GOETHE, SCHILLER, AND LESSING

## § 1

### GOETHE

WHEN, eight years after Goethe's death (in 1832), Carlyle delivered his lecture on the Hero as Man of Letters, he acclaimed him as the greatest, and said: "To that man there was given what we may call a life in the Divine Idea of the World; vision of the inward divine mystery: and strangely, out of his Books, the world rises imaged once more as godlike, the workmanship and temple of a God, illuminated all, not in fierce impure fire-splendour as of Mahomet, but in mild celestial radiance;—really a Prophecy in these most unprophetic times; to my mind by far the greatest, though one of the quietest, among all the great things that have come to pass in them." But having said this he turned abruptly from Goethe with the observation that the time was not ripe to talk at large about him to an English cultured audience. "Speak as I might, Goethe, to the great majority of you, would remain problematic, vague; no impression but a false one could be realised."

Since these words were uttered Goethe's appeal to English readers had steadily advanced, but, not less certainly, suffered a check by reason of the Great War of 1914–18. Its advance is figured in Matthew Arnold, accepted long after Carlyle's:

> When Goethe's death was told, we said:
> Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.
> Physician of the iron age,
> Goethe has done his pilgrimage.
> He took the suffering human race,
> He read each wound, each weakness clear;
> And struck his finger on the place,
> And said: *Thou ailest here, and here!*

He looked on Europe's dying hour
Of fitful dream and feverish power;
His eye plunged down the weltering strife,
The turmoil of expiring life—
He said: *The end is everywhere;*
*Art still has truth, take refuge there!*
And he was happy, if to know
Causes of things, and far below
His feet to see the lurid flow
Of terror, or insane distress,
And headlong fate, be happiness.

Goethe, without being a Shakespeare, was cast in that mighty mould which we must call Shakespearean. He fell short of Shakespeare, and he was different from Shakespeare, who was, so to speak, a "ninth wave" breaking on our Elizabethan shores with the momentum of great seas behind him, whereas Goethe was virtually a first wave unsupported and unimpelled by tradition or racial inspiration. Shakespeare crowned English literature. Goethe founded German literature. No Chaucer, no Spenser, behind *him*; no long speech of his race; no great companions such as Shakespeare had; no air of poetry and national expression such as Shakespeare breathed. Naked, Goethe came into German literature; clothed in purple and fine linen of his own weaving he went out.

Yet Goethe is little read in England to-day. A great deal that he wrote will never be read. He is still German, still remote, and there have been two wars with Germany. Yet Carlyle's and Arnold's words stand good. In 1914 there was an ignoble tendency to belittle Goethe, and to go back, so to speak, on all that we ever said or thought in his praise. As if true greatness does not survive the follies of men and their epileptic falls into strife and disorder! Shortly after the Great War Mr. Edmund Gosse wrote these monitory words:

> We must be careful to see that the natural prejudice which recent events have created, or emphasised, in our minds against German schools of thought does not extend to depriving us of the incomparable privilege of sunning ourselves in the broad light of Goethe.

It is this broad light that remains unweakened, as all light does which prophetically lights up the things that are of to-day, yesterday, and for ever. Of a surety, there is good

reason to-day why we should read Goethe, who was not only great in an age of war and ferment like our own, but foresaw so many of the things which were to come and which are now with us. He died in 1832, and it was in 1827 that he said to young Eckermann :

We Germans are of yesterday. We have indeed been properly cultivated for a century ; but a *few centuries more* must still elapse before so much mind and elevated culture will become universal amongst our people that they will appreciate beauty like the Greeks, that they will be inspired by a beautiful song, and that it will be said of them, " it is long since they were barbarians."

He compared the typical German and the typical Englishman of his age with the wisdom and penetration of an observing father. Young Britons came to Weimar frequently, and Goethe's eye was on them. He saw two stages of development—a real gulf which " a few centuries more " were needed to bridge. " Still," objected Eckermann,

Still, I would not assert that the young Englishmen in Weimar are more clever, more intelligent, better informed, or more excellent at heart than other people.

Goethe did not contradict him, but answered :

The secret does not lie in those things, my good friend. Neither does it lie in birth and riches ; it lies in the courage which they have to be what Nature has made them. There is nothing vitiated or spoilt about them, there is nothing half-way or crooked ; but such as they are, they are thoroughly complete men.

The sight of our Scotch Highlanders under the Duke of Wellington in Brussels reduced Goethe to despair :

They all carried their heads so freely and gallantly, and stepped so lightly along with their strong bare legs, that it seemed as if there were no original sin, and no ancestral failing, so far as they were concerned.

In short, Goethe knew in 1828 why the Allies were going to win the war in 1918.

He looked wisely and wistfully on English literature. He had formed himself in his first period on Shakespeare, and reverted later to his great model. He envied Scott. He admired Byron to distraction. He understood why Burns is great as well as anyone has understood it.

Goethe would have fought in the Napoleonic Wars if he

had been of military age. He was reproached for not having even written war songs, and talking in his last year about this, he said to Eckermann :

> How could I write songs of hatred without hating ! . . . Altogether, national hatred is something peculiar. You will always find it strongest and most violent where there is the lowest degree of culture. But there is a degree where it vanishes altogether, and where one stands to a certain extent *above* nations, and feels the weal or woe of a neighbouring people, as if it had happened to one's own. This degree of culture was conformable to my nature, and I had become strengthened in it long before I had reached my sixtieth year.

A passage which might well have been included in the breviary of the League of Nations.

Is this man to be neglected by us as German and remote, or severable from us by events and conditions which he never foresaw because they never belonged to his world ? Can his " broad light " be overcast ?

One of the earliest and most profound impressions made on this mighty German was made by our own Oliver Goldsmith. The man who has so often been described as a self-absorbed Olympian, contemplating the life of his fellow-men rather than sharing in it, and delivering messages too lofty for " human nature's daily food," said of *The Vicar of Wakefield* nearly sixty years after he had read it :

> It is not to be described, the effect that Goldsmith's *Vicar* had upon me, just at the critical moment of mental development. That lofty and benevolent irony, that fair and indulgent view of all infirmities and faults, that meekness under all calamities, that equanimity under all changes and chances, and the whole train of kindred virtues, whatever names they bear, proved my best education ; and in the end there are thoughts and feelings which have reclaimed us from all the errors of life.

It seems well thus to relate Goethe to ourselves, because it cannot be maintained that many English readers can face the huge task of reading his works in a German light, or of understanding them as a great German phenomenon and development. Much that he wrote has faded. Much will never fade.

Where, then, look for Goethe's " broad light," and how are we to " sun ourselves " in that light ? Probably the best advice that can be given to readers in an age of hurry and of multiplying appeals to their attention is to read that wonderful record of Goethe's thoughts and table-talk, *Con-*

*versations of Goethe with Eckermann and Soret.* It is one of the most eye-opening and stimulating books in the world. The work was translated from the German a good many years ago by John Oxenford and published in the Bohn Library. Eckermann, when he met his master, was a young poet; Goethe was in his seventy-fourth year, and full of old experience and prophetic strain. Their friendship lasted until Goethe's death, nine years later, and the "Conversations" are the record of a great man's talk and a young man's discipleship.

An interesting element in these "Conversations" is Goethe's general literary advice to his young friend; it is as applicable to-day to young writers as it was a hundred years ago. Thus he urges Eckermann to found his poems on actual experiences, and to seek inspiration in realities—not in large and vague reflections. "I attach no value to poems snatched out of the air." Apprehend the individual is his counsel:

> While you content yourself with generalities everyone can imitate you; but in the particular no one can—and why? because no others have experienced exactly the same thing."

Goethe's mind was as practical as it was speculative, as critical as it was imaginative, and thus Eckermann's pages read like those of a super-commonplace book. Here you find Goethe discussing a classical medal; there, with the nicest learning, the art of making bows and arrows; or he is pointing out the beauty of a master's drawing, or developing his theory of colour, or expounding the value of inoculation—there is no end to his variety. Thus he discusses the fashion, beginning then, and rampant to-day, of putting quaint old furniture into modern houses.

From all these details of life Goethe continually returns to the highest and deepest subjects that can occupy man. Here is an observation which has a profound bearing on the present cult of spiritualism:

> This occupation with the ideas of immortality is for people of rank, and especially ladies, who have nothing to do. But an able man, who has something regular to do here, and must toil and struggle and produce day by day, leaves the future world to itself, and is active and useful in teis. Thoughts about immortality are also good for those who have not been successful here; and I would wager that, if the good Tiedge had enjoyed a better lot, he would also have had better thoughts.

And this is another of his deeper reflections :

People treat it as if that incomprehensible and most high Being, who is even beyond the reach of thought, were only their equal. Otherwise, they would not say the *Lord God*, the *dear God*, the *good God*. This expression comes to them, especially to the clergy, who have it daily in their mouths, a mere phrase, a barren name, to which no thought is attached whatever. If they were impressed by His greatness they would be dumb, and through veneration unwilling to name Him.

Even these few quotations will indicate the range of a book in which the " broad light " of Goethe is suffused in every page.

§ 2

Johann Wolfgang Goethe was the son of an imperial councillor, and his birthplace was Frankfort-on-Maine, in 1749. While a student his interests grew so broad that, Leonardo-like, during an outwardly very placid lifetime he produced countless essays on every branch of natural history, and monographs on a score of subjects ranging from law to religion ; he made contributions to science that placed him among the forerunners of those great thinkers who have set forth the doctrine of evolution ; and he painted pictures, worked at sculpture, managed a theatre, translated several famous works, including Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, and as a critic prophesied the future of both Scott and Carlyle as he affirmed the splendour of Byron. His career has long been the best argument in the hands of those who believe a thoroughgoing, all-round culture to be a necessity for the artist. Incidentally, he had many love affairs and attachments. Over eighteen are on record, and each of them left its mark on his character and his work.

*Goetz with the Iron Hand*, written under Shakespearean influence, was published when he was twenty-four. Goethe next concentrated on a figure of limitless sensibility, and his *Sorrows of Werther*, a story published a year later, produced an almost unexampled sensation. It is based on an actual occurrence by which Goethe had recently been impressed, a young man named Jerusalem having shot himself in consequence of an unhappy attachment for a married lady.

In Werther's distracted mind the thought of a similar suicide is developed very gradually from a skilfully dramatised incident, during which Werther is playing with the pistols of a friend, and idly presses the muzzle of one of them to his forehead. Countless readers put into the story their own exaggerated cravings, unsatisfied passions, and imaginary sorrows; and it has been said that suicides became quite fashionable from China to Peru, many being actually laid to the poor author's charge!

Within the next twelve years Goethe had completed three of his finest dramas, *Egmont*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, and *Torquato Tasso*—dramas which it does not seem necessary to discuss here in detail.

An impressive characteristic of all Goethe's work is the length of time and the amount of labour he expended in bringing it to completion. His largest expenditure of time and labour went to the preparation of the two best-known masterpieces, for *Faust* was commenced as far back as 1773, when he was twenty-four, the first part of it being finally completed in 1806, the second not till 1831. *Wilhelm Meister*, his prose masterpiece, was begun four years after *Faust*, and was finished only three years before Goethe's death, its composition thus spreading over a period of fifty-two years, as against fifty-eight years in the case of *Faust*! But the second part of each of these works is inferior in every way to the first part. Indeed, the general reader is hardly aware that *Faust* does not conclude at that magnificent moment in which is heard the choir of angels declaring triumphantly of the dying Margaret that, despite the machinations of Mephistopheles and the sin committed by her with Faust that engulfs herself, her mother, brother, and child, "She is saved": the moment that ends with the cry of the demon to Faust—"Hither to me!"—the most terrible cry in the whole range of supernatural literature.

The incidents leading to this great climax have been made familiar through countless versions of legends and story, one of the earliest to recognise tremendous possibilities in Dr. Faustus and his ultimate damnation being our own Christopher Marlowe. The legend of Faust goes back far. The story is that this magician, a native of Swabia, was left

a fortune by his uncle. He wasted it in riotous living, pursued pleasure and did not find it. When he had spent all, instead of returning like the Prodigal to the haunts of peace and purity, he made a pact with the Devil that he might live his life of indulgence for twenty-four years, at the end of which period he would give up his body and soul to his great partner. On such a theme any great philosophical poet might build. Goethe is said to have received his first inspiration for his drama from a marionette performance in which Faust was beaten to death by the devil, much to the edification of all good Christians among the audience. There are thirty or forty translations of Goethe's *Faust* in English, and Bayard Taylor's rendering is to be recommended, for it is easily obtainable, and conveys the spirit and substance of the German original with admirable success. Margaret's song at the spinning-wheel, after her first meeting with Faust, may be quoted as a fair example of Taylor's work, and also as representing the exquisite tenderness of Goethe's lyric poetry :

My peace is gone,
My heart is sore;
I never shall find it,
Ah, nevermore! . . .

To see him, him only,
At the pane I sit;
To meet him, him only,
The house I quit.

Faust's answer to Margaret's inquiry as to his belief in God is an example of Goethe's power :

Who dare express Him?
And who profess Him,
Saying: "I believe in Him!"
Who, feeling, seeing, deny His being,
Saying: "I believe Him not!"
The All-enfolding, the All-upholding,
Folds and upholds he not thee, me, Himself!
Arches there not the sky above us?
Lies not beneath us, firm, the earth?
And rise not, on us shining,
Friendly, the everlasting stars?
Look I not, eye to eye, on thee,
And feel'st not, thronging

To head and heart, the force
Still weaving its eternal secret,
Invisible, visible, round thy life?
Vast as it is, fill with that force thy heart,
And when thou in the feeling wholly blessed art,
Call it, then, what thou wilt,—
Call it Bliss! Heart! Love! God!

Of *Faust*, G. H. Lewes has said:

It appeals to all minds with the irresistible fascination of an eternal problem, and with the charm of endless variety. It has every element: wit, pathos, wisdom, farce, mystery, melody, reverence, doubt, magic, and irony: not a chord of the lyre is unstrung, not a fibre of the heart untouched. Students earnestly wrestling with doubt, striving to solve the solemn riddles of life, feel their pulses strangely agitated by this poem; and not students alone, but as Heine, with allowable exaggeration, says, every billiard-marker in Germany puzzles himself over it. In *Faust* we see, as in a mirror, the eternal problem of our intellectual existence.

The student of *Faust* will find no lack of commentators to help him on his way. But none will be needed for the appreciation of the poetical beauties of Goethe's masterpiece—of the subtlety of its characterisations, of the glowing fancy which illumines so many passages, from the prologue in heaven down to the last thrilling prison scene, and of the charming lyrical pieces and songs with which the tragedy is interspersed.

Goethe's greatest novel, *Wilhelm Meister*, was begun in 1777. Next to *Faust* it is his chief work and contains the most of his philosophy of life. It is very long, and to English readers not a little wearisome. Goethe did not complete the last "book" of the story until 1829. The importance of *Wilhelm Meister* lies in the fact that it was the pioneer of the "novel with a purpose," and the first application of the novel to moral and cultural instruction. Its theme is the importance of a man choosing his vocation aright.

The pictures in *Wilhelm Meister* of German life and society are done with great skill. None but the author of *Faust* could have written it; for not only does *Wilhelm Meister* show the general advance of man from immaturity to perfection of intellect and life-culture, but the sequel (*Wilhelm Meister's Wanderings*) is very closely related to



MEPHISTOPHELES AND FAUST.
After the etching by Edmund J. Sullivan.
*Mephistopheles:* A stratagem, perhaps, may gain
The fortress. *Faust.*

the second part of *Faust*, in which the erstwhile pawn of Mephistopheles flings from him his first unhappy environment and advances through all forms of culture, statesmanship, science, art, and war, to the final and simple wisdom of disinterested service rendered to his fellow-men.

For Goethe's pure wisdom the English reader may go to his *Maxims and Reflections*, translated by Mr. Bailey Saunders. They are in four sections: "Life and Character," "Literature and Art," "Science," and "Nature." They are not epigrams, nor have they the polish and neatness of the French *pensée*. As Mr. Saunders says, it is depth and truth and sanity of observation that marks these registrations of Goethe's thoughts: "it is no concern of his to dazzle the mind by the brilliancy of his wit; nor does he labour to say things because they are striking, but only because they are true." We may well take leave of Goethe by quoting some of these pearls of wisdom:

How can a man come to know himself? Never by thinking, but by doing. Try to do your duty, and you will know at once what you are worth.

The most insignificant man can be complete if he works within the limits of his capacities, innate and acquired; but even fine talents can be obscured, neutralised, and destroyed by lack of the indispensable requirement of symmetry. This is a mischief which will often occur in modern times; for who will be able to come up to the claims of an age so full and intense as this, and one, too, that moves so rapidly?

It is a great error to take oneself for more than one is, or for less than one is worth.

Character calls forth character.

I keep silence about many things, for I do not want to put people out of countenance; and I am well content if they are pleased with things that annoy me.

Piety is not an end, but a means: a means of attaining the highest culture by the purest tranquillity of soul.

Whoso is content with pure experience and acts upon it has enough of truth. The growing child is wise in this sense.

Certain minds must be allowed their peculiarities.

Everyone has his peculiarities and cannot get rid of them; and yet many a one is destroyed by his peculiarities, and those, too, of the most innocent kind.

A state of things in which every day brings some new trouble is not the right one.

Soon after the first meeting of Goethe and Schiller, which took place in 1794, the two poets engaged in a bout of friendly rivalry which they christened "A Year of Ballads," composing many pieces one against the other. The ballads that Schiller composed were superior to the majority of Goethe's, and although he can hardly be accounted as of the front rank of lyric poets, Johann Christoph

Friedrich Schiller is second to none in German dramatic poetry. Not only is he the best-loved, the favourite poet among his own people to this day, but his position is high among the world's writers of dramatic verse.

## § 3

### SCHILLER

Schiller was born in 1759 at Marbach, ten years later than his friend, and he endured a life of poverty and ill-health very bravely, pursuing in turn the labours of a surgeon, an editor, a theatre-manager, and a professor of history. The main result of his own *Sturm und Drang* period had been his arrest and flight into hiding from the tyrannous Duke Carl Eugen; therefore the friendship of Goethe, that commenced when Schiller was thirty-five, was like a gift of balm from heaven.

Under the stimulus of his new friendship Schiller completed the work which Carlyle declares to have been the "greatest dramatic writing of which the eighteenth century can boast," despite the fact that its author's health was so bad that every hour at his desk cost him several hours' suffering. This work is a trilogy, consisting of *Wallenstein's Camp*, *The Two Piccolomini*, and *Wallenstein's Death*, the last-named having been translated by Coleridge.

A direct result of the contact with Goethe was the writing of *William Tell*, Schiller's most famous drama, and the last he lived to finish. He had composed in quick succession his dramatic portraits of Mary Stuart and Joan of Arc, about which time Goethe was planning to write an epic dealing with the partly legendary, partly actual hero of the Swiss Revolution, William Tell, who is ordered by the tyrant Gessler to shoot an apple from his little son's head or, if he should aim wrongly, die. But Goethe's scheme came to naught, and Schiller, fired by their many talks on the subject, resolved to take over the theme and treat it dramatically. The result was a noble one. The play was rapturously received throughout Germany, crystallising as it did the national aspiration towards freedom. Goethe staged it at Weimar, and Weber offered to set it to music. One of the

most thrilling moments of the play follows immediately on Tell's triumph over his terrible ordeal with the arrow and the apple. The baffled Gessler notices a second arrow in Tell's belt, and demands an explanation :

> TELL (*confused*). It is a custom with all archers, sir
> GESSLER. No, Tell, I cannot let that answer pass.
> There was some other motive, well I know.
> Frankly and freely let me have the truth :—
> Whate'er it be, I promise thee thy life.
> Wherefore the second arrow ?
> TELL. Well, then, my lord,
> Since you have promised not to take my life,
> I will, without reserve, declare the truth.
> (*He draws the arrow from his belt, and fixes the governor with a terrible look.*)
> If that my hand had struck my darling child,
> This second arrow should have pierced your heart.
> And be assured, I should not then have missed !

Goethe and Schiller formed the habit of sending greetings to each other on the first day of the new year. On January 1, 1805, Goethe inadvertently wrote in his letter the phrase " the last year." He rewrote the note, but again the phrase appeared. With a shudder of presentiment he said, " I feel that for one of us this is the last year." And, true enough, ere half its course was run Schiller was dead. At the news the great, calm Goethe broke down completely. " He covered his face with his hands and sobbed like a woman. For days no one dared mention Schiller's name in his presence." He never spoke of Schiller's " death " ; it was always " When I lost him." And once in a letter he wrote, " The half of my existence has gone from me."

Goethe survived his friend by twenty-seven years. His own death, at the age of eighty-three, with honours thick upon him, was as serene as his life had been. The end came, we read, while he was seated in his arm-chair, with his daughter-in-law holding his hand in hers. Half an hour previously he had asked that the shutters might be opened to let the day enter. Often since that event, which Matthew Arnold celebrated in one of his most noble poems, has it been remarked how characteristic it was that he who had been the great " light-bringer " of his age should conclude his own pilgrimage with the prayer that began it—" Licht ! mehr licht ! "—" Light ! more light ! "

## § 4

### LESSING

Goethe's supremacy in German creative literature has its counterpart in Lessing's supremacy in German criticism. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was born in 1729, and was therefore Goethe's senior by twenty years. His early life was that of a student at Leipzig and Berlin. He had been destined for the Church, but his genius ran to the cultivation of his taste and its correction by the highest standards. He was early attracted to the stage and to the history of the theatre. In 1750 he published his *History of the Theatre*, and five years later his tragedy, *Miss Sara Sampson*, which influenced Germany by its abandonment of French dramatic conventions in favour of the much wider freedom of English drama. Various critical literary studies came from his pen which need not be named. His *Dramatic Notes* are of high importance still. Developing his attack on French classical tragedy, he reasoned that Greek drama and Shakespeare were the true models for German dramatic art to follow. Lessing was, in fact, the founder of the immense German appreciation of Shakespeare.

*Laocoon* was published in 1766. In its kind, it was the greatest work published in the eighteenth century. It was an original and masterly inquiry into the principles of criticism as they are founded on the history of human expression. It is not too much to say that it made Goethe and Schiller possible. Goethe himself said: "One must be a youth in order to realise the effect produced upon us by Lessing's *Laocoon*, which transported us from the region of miserable observation into the free fields of thought."

What Lessing did was to lay down, in masterly fashion, a distinction which is eternal but which had been much obscured in his age—the distinction, or rather the difference, between the functions of poetry and the plastic arts (Sculpture and Painting).

Lessing called his book *Laocoon* because it suited him to make the famous statue of Laocoon and his two sons being strangled by Jove-sent serpents (after Laocoon's warning to the Trojans not to receive the Wooden Horse) a test of what



*Photo: Anderson.*

LAOCOON.

The Vatican, Rome

This famous piece of sculpture is now in the Vatican Museum, Rome. Lessing called his book *Laocoon* because it suited him to make the famous statue of Laocoon and his two sons being strangled by Jove-sent serpents (after Laocoon's warning to the Trojans not to receive the Wooden Horse) a test of what could be rightly done in sculpture to represent agony in marble, as against what could be rightly done by a poet (Virgil) to describe it in words.

could rightly be done in sculpture to represent agony in marble, as against what could be rightly done by a poet (Virgil) to describe it in words. The statue was no more than a text, but because it was his text he made it his title.

His point is that sculpture and painting cannot do, and rightly refrains from doing, what can be done by the poet.

In exploring this difference of principle, Lessing illuminates all criticism. It is impossible to read *Laocoon* without seeing and feeling in every page his honesty of thought. He never dogmatises. He gives its due to every argument contrary to his own view, and this so fairly as almost to weaken his own thesis in the eyes of readers who want strong writing and anvil-like blows of conclusion. But this was wholly characteristic of Lessing, who thought and wrote :

> If God were to hold in his *right* hand all Truth, and in his *left* hand the single ever-active impulse to seek after Truth, even though with the condition that I must eternally remain in error, and say to me, " Choose," I would with humility fall before his *left* hand and say, " Father, give ! For pure thoughts belong to Thee alone ! "

These are noble words, and Goethe must surely have had them in mind when he wrote of Lessing : " Only one equally great could understand him ; to mediocrity he was dangerous."

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